

Keeping in Touch K.I.T.

Our Aim: To know Christ and make him known No 72: Winter 2012



Out on a Limb

LET US think about a neglected character of Christmas: Joseph. The popular speaker and author Max Lucado guided me to our reflections today. We all can enter into the situation where Joseph found himself.

Come back with me to a lovely spring day. Perhaps you lay on the grass and looked up at a magnificent tree. See the sturdy trunk and the thick lower branches. A breeze stirs the topmost branches, but do the lower branches move? No.

That is where Joseph sat. A carpenter, he knew about wood. He knew that safety and security when climbing a tree was to be found close to the trunk, not out on a limb. He could not be shaken from there when the winds blew. He had no intention of moving. This was his comfort zone.

Then one day, his safe existence was shattered. Where he was now sitting was on a much thinner, branch that moved in the wind.

Mary, his beloved, his fiancée, had become pregnant, and he knew for a fact that it was not his. Read the story in Matthew 1:18:

'This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.'

Joseph was a kindly man. He could have exposed her as an adulterous woman, and got an instant and honourable divorce; and possibly had Mary stoned. He decided to move gently along this thinner branch, holding on securely, and, as v19 says, *'Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.'*

In today's language, they were engaged. The parents or a match-maker would do the arrangements. Then came a betrothal, when the couple ratified the agreement. At this stage either could opt out. However, once the couple became betrothed, it was binding. That lasted for a year, during which it was as if they were man and wife, except they did not live together. Often they were called man & wife. The only way to break the relationship was to go through a divorce.

So here, on his swaying limb, Joseph finds himself at the edge of his comfort zone.

'But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit". Matt 1: 20
"Conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit"! Come on! It has never happened before!

So what made Joseph move from the solid, immovable place where he had sat comfortably to a springy, unsafe, and certainly unstable limb? God had said it, and that must have bothered him.

If God told you to move from your comfort zone and do something radical for Him in the New Year would you do so without question? How far out on the limb would you venture? Part way, or all the way?

Perhaps some of us have been like Joseph, caught on a limb with one foot on the branch of God's will and the other

on the 'safe' branch of our own will. Perhaps, like me, butterflies have flown frantically around your stomach when you realise that changes are afoot in your life, and it is time to test the strength of the branch you are on.

The central verse in this dramatic story is Matthew 1: 24

'When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.'

The only eternally safe way is to do just what the Lord commands.

Joseph chose the limb - really the only option. Joseph knew that the only thing worse than a venture into the unknown was the thought of denying His Master. So resolutely, he grasped the smaller branch. He placed one hand in front of the other until he dangled in the air with only his faith in God as a safety net.

Did everything turn out all right? Well not exactly! Joseph's fears were justified. Life went from comfortable to challenging, from dependable routine to disaster, from following the law to a fugitive from the law.

I am sure that, because Joseph went out on a limb for His Lord, he never regretted it.

Are you challenged to go out on a limb for Him? You can be sure that it will never be easy.

One of the hidden challenges of the Christmas story is to trust in the leading of the Lord. Be assured, that the God who led Joseph out on a limb, is the same God who was born in a stable. He knows, He loves, He cares. That is the story and the challenge of Christmas.

'Come with Me', says Jesus, 'for I know all about hanging on a tree for you.'

Adapted from a sermon by Pastor Paul Clee

The Innkeeper's Tale by Deborah Mercer.

I'm an old man now, grey-haired and slow,
And live in my memories of long ago,
Though they seem as close as yesterday,
And not all the years of my lifetime away...

But my inn was full! There was no room there,
Only rough straw, in a stable bare,
Only a manger, humble to see,
With the ox and the ass for company.

And I think of that night I will never forget,
And I'm filled with shame and remorse and regret,
But how could I know? Yes, how could I know,
On that night so long, so long ago?

How could I know? I had no idea,
But now I must often shed a tear,
As I think of that night long, long ago,
When they asked for a room, and I said, 'No'

How could I know as they stood at the door?
I'd said 'no' to countless people before!
Yes, I pitied that young man and his wife,
And the babe they bore, that burgeoning life!

Yet, suddenly, peace has come over me,
And it's not just an old man's fancy - I see
A glowing light that fills the gloom
Of my dark and memory-echoing room.

And I hear a voice that is gentle and kind,
It soothes my soul and eases my mind,
*'Be at peace! For you did not, you could not know,
And I love you now, as I did long ago'*

(Used with the kind permission of 'The People's Friend')

WELL STRESSED! Richard J B Willis MA MSc FRSPH

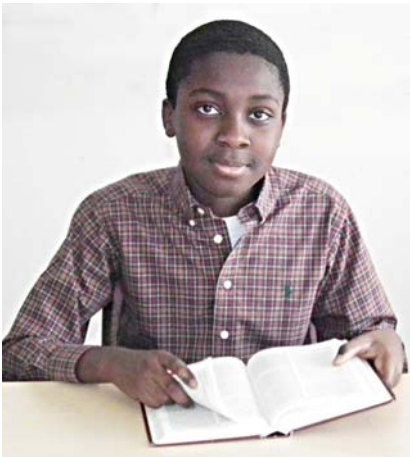
THE TITLE of the piece could describe either end of the **stress spectrum** since there are two opposing types of stress. We are all familiar with the nasty end which we should more properly describe as **distress**. What may not be so readily known is that the other end is called **eustress** (well stress), and rather than being destructive it confers health-giving benefits.

Whilst the mechanisms of stress activate pretty much the same chemistry in the body the outcomes are different. We can probably all remember at least one experience of **euphoria** and know the difference between that and other stress outcomes. When we take healthy risks or excel at something we have a natural 'high' and a sense of well-being. As with any kind of stress we cannot live at this level every moment of every day, but we can experience eustress regularly and with periodic increase. So there is no harm in looking forward to being well-stressed! We should welcome it in fact.



KIT Flashback

BELOW is the photo I promised of **Michael Okafor** who was baptised on August 18. Frank Blewitt took the photo. Next to it is a photo, taken by June Coombs, of Alesha Thomson with Pastor Paul Clee.



Alesha's Story by June Coombs

ARRIVING at church for the annual Harvest Festival service on 6th October worshippers were surprised to find an unusual twist for, in addition to the traditional produce on display, there was also a harvest of souls in the form of a baptism as Alesha Thomson publicly declared her intention to follow Jesus.

As Alesha says, she was not brought up a Christian in her native New Zealand but *'had always felt a pull towards God and that maybe one day she would be part of His plans.'* That plan was to take 30 years to mature, and span three continents – from New Zealand to Australia and then to London via Kenya!

Whilst volunteering at a Kenyan orphanage Alesha first came across Adventists, as not only were the couple running the orphanage church members but also some friends she made there who were running a dental surgery in the Masai Mara. Passing through London on their way back to America these dentists met up with an old Adventist dentist friend, Louis Guenin, who agreed, with his family, to be a contact for Alesha when she arrived in London.

Upon arrival she soon made contact with them and this led to not only becoming the dentist's practice receptionist in London but also attending Brian Davison's campaign meetings, *'Faith According to Jesus'*, and taking Bible studies with Pastor Jim Huzzey before requesting baptism. She was baptised by Senior Minister, Pastor Paul Clee.

Unfortunately, we will not have much time to get to know Alesha as her visa expires in the New Year and she will be returning *'Down Under'*.

KIT Correspondence

PETE Walton, a new member of our KIT team, has given KIT an e-mail address:

kit@stanboroughchurch.org

So far many of our on-line readers have used it. We'd love to hear from you too. No need to use the net. You can write to Pete or to me at Stanborough Park Church, 609 St Albans Road, Garston, Watford. WD25 9JL. We'd welcome short articles about you, your families, your favourite Bible texts, or favourite hymns and why you like them etc. Photos too if you like but they would have to be *'contrasty'*, at least 78kb to 1 Mb, preferably with something black and something white in the photo. Also if you'd like to go on-line, please e-mail to KIT or me. The KIT team would love you to start keeping in touch with us.

These are a few of the comments received up to now:

'Thank you for sending this to me, please continue to send me any more information' from M.M. in Canada

'Hi Pete. Thanks for KIT' from A.E. in Cyprus

'Hi Pete. Good to hear from you. Thanks for the autumn issue of KIT.' from D.C. New Zealand.

'Dear Peter, Thank you for your email and the August KIT 2012. I acknowledge receipt and wish to remain on the mailing list. Thanks,' from another D.C. in Lebanon.

'To Peter, Many thanks for the contact..... I am happy to keep receiving KIT, and I thank you for putting my name on the mailing list.' from T.Le C. England.



NEWS, NEWS, NEWS!

CONGRATULATIONS to **Natalie and Ben Davison** on the birth of **Zachary Elliott** in October.

Also to **Dr Carl London** on his appointment as **Professor of Mental Health** at the university of Manitoba in Canada. Sadly this means we shall be losing **Carl and Wendy and Rebecca..**

On November 3, **Pastor Karin Wieczorek** dedicated **Gabrielle Imani Gaynor** to the **Lord**. More congratulations are due to her parents **Carles and Horace**. The photo of the family, left, was taken by **Frank Blewitt**

We wish future happiness to **Jerry De Courtney-Odle** who has transferred to Tokyo Central Church.

The church's **Welfare Department** is in urgent need of single bed sheets and duvet covers.

If It Were Christmas Now by Deborah Mercer

THE SHEPHERDS tending flocks by night,
Astounded by the wondrous sight
Of angels shining overhead,
And of the glorious words they said..
Before they went to Bethlehem,
They'd say, '*We've friends, we must phone them!*'
The mobile phones would be whipped out
And everyone informed, no doubt!

The wise men, following the star,
Coming from Eastern lands afar,
Would rush to their computers, start
To plot their route upon a chart,
Quickly, without hesitation,
A satellite for navigation!
Gold, frankincense and myrrh they'd bring,
But *not* send e-mails to the King!

And Baby Jesus? Full of grace
And in His mother's warm embrace,
If Christmas were to happen now,
What would He do? I think, somehow,
That very little would be changed,
For all was perfectly arranged
More than two thousand years before -
He'd love us, keep us, evermore!
(Also used with the kind permission of '*The People's Friend*')



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**WE END BY WISHING ALL OUR READERS
A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY
AND GOD'S ABUNDANT BLESSING IN THE NEW YEAR.**

Two lessons from Bird-life.

APPARENTLY when young eaglets are old enough to leave the nest, but like most birds reluctant to do so, the mother eagle upsets it so they fall out. Then she swoops down and catches them on her outspread wings, so they come to no harm. We can read all about this in Deuteronomy 32: 8 -11. (The Living Bible): ***When God divided up the world among the nations, he gave each of them a supervising angel! But he appointed none for Israel; for Israel was God's own personal possession! God protected them in the howling wilderness, as though they were the apple of his eye, he spreads his wings over them, even as an eagle overspreads her young, she carries them upon her wings - as does the Lord his people!***

After a forest fire in Yellowstone National Park, forest rangers began their trek up a mountain to assess the damage. One ranger found a bird petrified in ashes, perched statuesquely on the ground at the base of a tree. He knocked over the bird with a stick. As he gently struck it, three tiny chicks scurried from under their dead mother's wings. Keenly aware of the impending disaster, the loving mother had carried her offspring to the base of the tree and had gathered them under her wings, instinctively knowing that the toxic smoke would rise. She could have flown to safety but had refused to abandon her babies. Then the blaze had arrived and the heat had scorched her small body. She had been willing to die, so those under the cover of her wings would live.

Jesus referred to this habit of female birds. See Matthew 23: 37 in The Living Bible:

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem.....How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you wouldn't let me.'

Recently during the TV programme 'Songs of Praise', the congregation sang a lovely song these two stories reminded me of. The first verse of the song was

***Come let us sing of a wonderful love
Tender and true.,
Out of the heart of the Father above,
Streaming to me and to you.
Wonderful love
Dwells in the heart of the Father above.***

**Enjoy a really lovely Christmas,
and remember Jesus is the reason for the season.**

Junior's Page made by your friends at Stanborough Park Church

Christmas Edition

A big hello to everyone from the juniors at Stanborough Church. It's getting cold outside with some frosty nights and the trees are looking bare but it's always warm inside the church. This time we have got a Christmas Story, a special

crossword puzzle about Stanborough Church (you can still do it even if you have not been there), a 'spot the difference' Christmas tree puzzle and a pictures to colour. But first of all the story.

UNLUCKY JIM – a story for Christmas

Jim's family was very poor. His little sister was an invalid and spent most of her days in bed. They did not hope for toys or special food or even much joy at Christmas.

As Jim trudged home from school each day, he would stop to look at the toys in the bright toy shop windows. More than anything, he wanted the little red fire engine. Jim knew he would never be lucky enough to get one. In fact, his only marble had rolled down a storm drain the previous week and Jim thought to himself "Ain't I just the unluckiest boy alive".

Then, one night just before Christmas, Jim received an invitation to a Christmas party for the poor children in the neighbourhood. A nice lady from a nearby church mission promised Jim a special gift. Jim grew excited as he drew near the mission. He couldn't believe his eyes when he saw the Christmas tree. It was covered with lights and surrounded by toys. Jim saw a bright red fire engine just like the one in the store window.

When it came time for each child to pick out a gift, Jim's heart nearly stopped. He was afraid that someone else would pick the fire engine. Fortunately, when his turn came, the little red fire engine was still under the tree. As Jim reached for the engine, he thought of his frail little sister at home in bed. He stopped and turned to the mission lady. He asked softly if he might pick two gifts, one for himself and one for his sister at home. The lady shook her head sadly and told Jim there were only enough presents for one for each child. *Continued on back page*



AROUND STANBOROUGH PARK CHURCH CROSSWORD PUZZLE

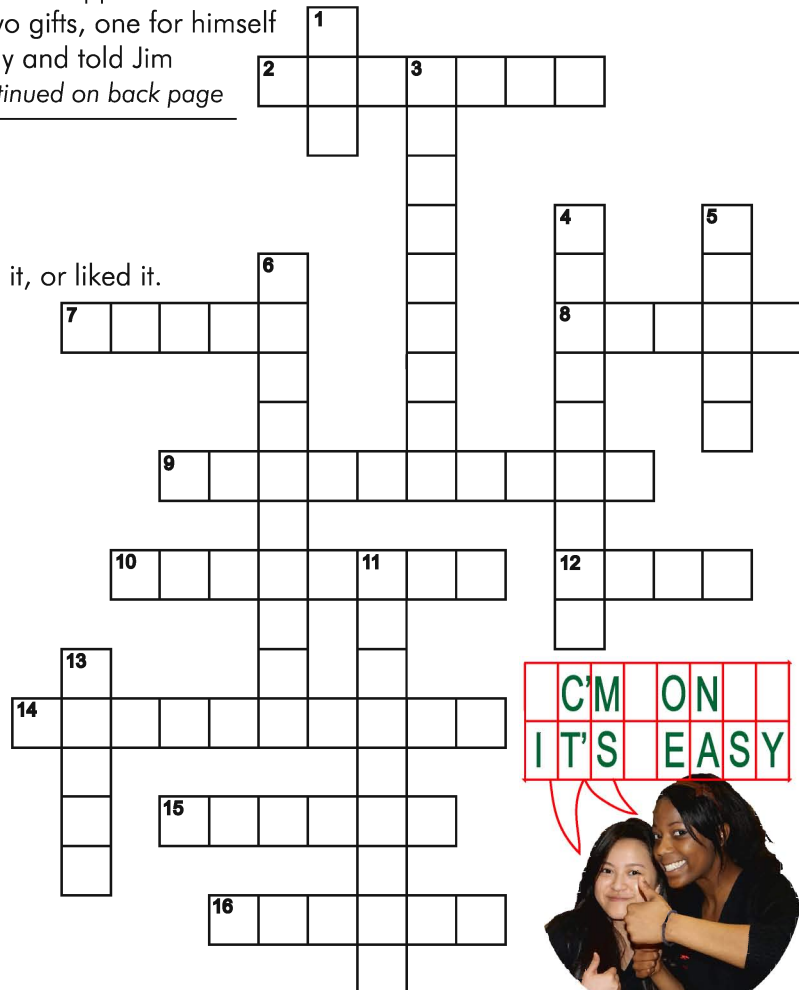
I hope you enjoy this crossword, answers on back of page. email (or get mum to) kit@stanboroughchurch.org if you did it, or liked it.

DOWN

1. Mighty strong tree in the church grounds (3)
3. The church woods are famous for these blue flowers (9)
4. Little white flowers that follow the snow (9)
5. This makes it green underfoot (5)
6. you might hear this bird hammering on the trees (10)
11. these little grey creatures live in the woods (9)
13. the tallest part of the church (5)

ACROSS

2. The church is fullest on this day (7)
7. You may hear this mellow stringed instrument in the church (5)
8. We sing hymns to this loud musical instrument (5)
9. One place you may get wet in the church (10)
10. Orange flowers that come in the springtime (8)
12. We sit on these inside the church (4)
14. A programme near Christmas specially for children (10)
15. This tree has lovely pink blossom the a red fruit (6)
16. you often hear this stringed instrument in the church (6)

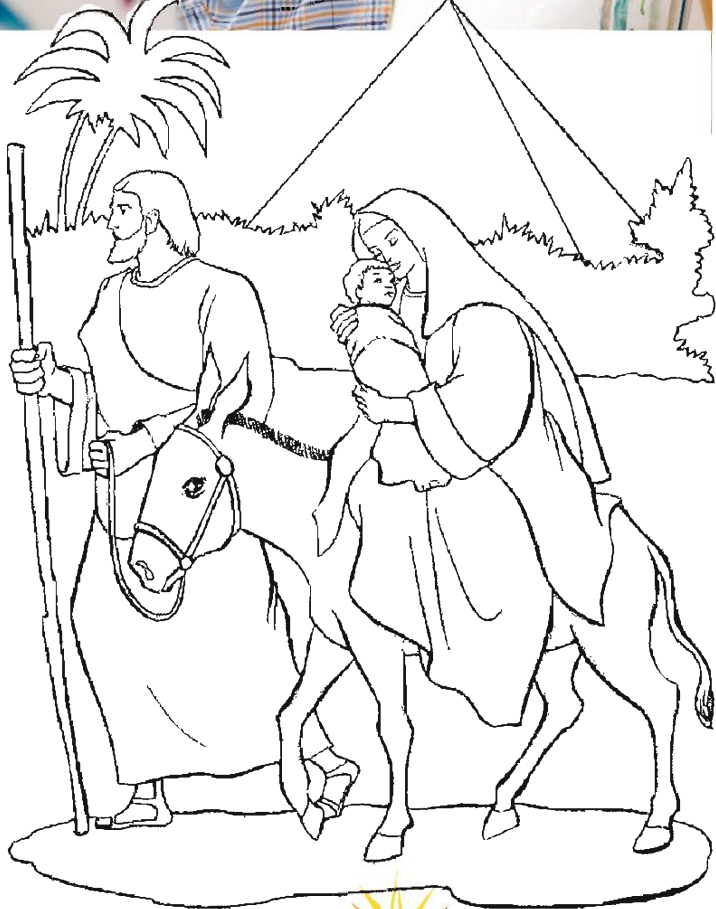


Jim looked longingly at the little fire engine. Then he quickly picked out the prettiest doll on the tree. It had blue eyes and curly blond hair just like his little sister. As he returned to his seat with the doll, the other children began to laugh and make fun of him. Jim clutched the little doll and ran from the mission. And he thought "Ain't I just the unluckiest boy alive"

"I'm so glad you have come!" said Jean when Jimmy returned "I was so lonely here all by myself". "I've brought a present back for" you said Jimmy. When Jean saw the doll she was so happy. Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie, you are so kind I think you are the greatest brother ever." Then Jim forgot all about his bad luck and a thrill of joy went through him as he saw his sister's delight.

As Jim sat by his little sister's bed watching her play with her doll, someone knocked on the door. It was the mission lady. She told him that the children were sorry they had laughed at him after she explained why he had chosen the doll for his little sister and they asked her to bring him a present for himself. To Jim's delight she handed him the most beautiful red fire engine he'd ever seen. And Jim thought "Ain't I just the luckiest boy alive".

Jim's unselfishness should be our model all year long. Christians celebrate Christmas to remember the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether or not you're a Christian by faith, Christ's life of giving, sharing and caring is a good example for all men. (From Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories by Arthur S. Maxwell)



Have you heard of Messy Church? Have you got a messy church near you? If you have it's worth a try! Play a bit, learn a bit, meet friends a bit.



Spot the difference

See how many differences between the two pictures you can find. Some things are changed, some things are added and some things are taken away. There are eleven changes altogether good luck.



Crossword Puzzle answers: Across: 2. sabbath, 7. cello, 8. organ, 9. baptistry, 10. crocuses, 12. pews, 14. toyservice, 15. cherry, 16. violin. **Down:** 1. oak, 3. bluebells, 4. snowdrops, 5. grass, 6. woodpecker, 11. squirrels, 13. tower