

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

6 December 2013: Rev'd Joanna Farrell, Assistant Priest, Steep and Froxfield with Privett



Christmas: red, white - or blue?

Red Christmas? Santa Claus is how we know Nicholas, Bishop of Myra. Born into a wealthy family he loved God from a very early age. Orphaned as a child, he decided to use his inheritance to help others. On 6th December the church remembers him and in the Netherlands presents are exchanged today rather than at Christmastime. Because of his good deeds and his teaching about God St Nicholas is the patron saint of children and bringer of gifts. Secretly he provided gold coins as dowries for the three daughters of a poor man, dropping them through an open window into their stockings hanging on the wall, leading to the tradition of disguise and secret present giving that has grown up around Santa Claus.

White Christmas? This is really one for the Meteorological Office but is very popular with songwriters and retailers. It looks good - clean, sparkly and festive but was it really part of the first Christmas, all those years ago in Bethlehem?

And Blue Christmas? Advent begins on Sunday and the church starts looking ahead to Christmas, long after the rest of the world it seems but with a rather different perspective. For many people Christmas is a happy time of family gatherings, shopping, feasting, and presents. For others this is a difficult time; they may have been bereaved, have financial difficulties, be ill or lonely, have relationship problems, an uncertain future or any number of other personal difficulties. If you, or someone you know, are likely to have a blue Christmas remember that Jesus came "to bring good news to the poor... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." The love of God that inspired St Nicholas to generosity is still alive and active today, working through ordinary people everywhere and we can all be part of it.

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