



BANNSIDE BUZZ

December 2017

This month's articles

Bah, Humbug!

What Makes Good News?

Meet the New Elders

and . . .

Christmas Quiz and One-Liners!

Good News

Good news tends to get to the point: 'I passed'; 'we won'; 'I got the job.' Luke's account of the birth of Jesus in Luke 2, vv.1-19 isn't quite that concise, but these nineteen verses are an amazing piece of writing, containing at their heart 'good news of great joy for all people' (Luke 2, v.10).

Initially, they sweep us along as they move from Caesar Augustus at the heart of the Roman Empire, to Syria at the Empire's edge, where Quirinius was governor. They then move from everyone needing to go to their own town, to Joseph needing to move from the obscure Galilean town of Nazareth, to the Judean backwater of Bethlehem. Ultimately though, our focus is drawn to Mary, and the child she is carrying.

So, the story begins with the events and processes of state—'In those days, the Emperor issued a decree that a census should be taken' (Luke 2, v.1), but arrives at the progress and process of pregnancy and birth—'the day and time came for the baby to be born' (Luke 2, v.6). Mary is the centre of the action: '*she* gave birth to her firstborn...*she* wrapped him in strips of cloth...*she* placed him in a manger' (Luke 2, v.7). *She* is central.

The scene must have included animals, such as the ox and ass, which tradition says surrounded the child of a loving mother and a loving God with their own unconditional devotion. New characters arrive. There are angels, who fade away like fireworks against the night sky, and there are shepherds, filled with wonder at the strange events. Finally, there is a one-verse, concluding response to everything that has happened, when attention again turns to Mary: she 'treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart' (Luke 2, v.19).



A story that began with Caesar Augustus issuing a directive ends with a girl reflecting in a stable. In the space of nineteen verses, we have moved: from exalted to humble; from public to private; from official to personal; from outer reality to inner reflection. And Luke gives the last word—or more accurately, a feeling too deep for words—to a woman.

There is much for us to ponder in our hearts here about the nature of good news. Luke expresses it as a challenging vision of a new kind of greatness: a woman of equal stature to her husband; a God who comes in peace; a king, born and at home on the margins of life, who stoops to conquer; a Saviour who cares for animals as well as humans.

If we get the point of this good news, it will change how we live and how we relate, to one another and to God. It overturns our old assumptions. Welcome to this Advent and Christmas edition of Bannside Buzz. It explores the theme of Good News.

The Hope of Advent, the Joy of Christmas, and the Good News of both to you,
Mark.

Good News—Bah, Humbug!

Halloween this year had hardly passed by before the great retail ‘carpet bombing’ onslaught of Christmas adverts commenced. This annual assault on our bank balances and our sentimentality will see wave upon wave of radio, internet and television bombardment between now and the 24th December after which time the annual January sale will kick off – with offers on all the things you were encouraged to buy the days and weeks beforehand at much reduced prices. Bah Humbug!



Already the social media ratings for all the Christmas retail adverts are being shared across the nation, with John Lewis this year lagging well behind the others, having backed their Christmas campaign fortunes with Moz the monster.

Tesco's are currently receiving some rather negative racist feedback regarding the inclusion of a Muslim family to promote their 'Everyone's welcome at Christmas' campaign.

M&S have Paddington help deliver Christmas Gifts with a rather reluctant Santa like individual whilst Lidl have gone for some good old fashioned – the way it used to be at Christmas whilst their homeland rivals



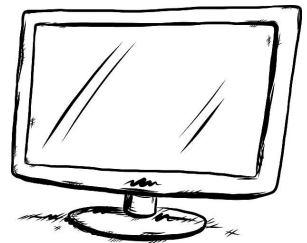
Aldi having topped the polls with their Kevin the carrot character which they created for their 2016 Christmas campaign.

ASDA have gone all Willy Wonka whilst Debenhams have recreated a modern take on Cinderella; Boots have gone all sentimental, promoting the bond that exists with families.

So it would appear that Christmas has now taken on board the need for the nation's retailers to come up with the perfect Christmas advert which social media and the press alike have taken with some serious aplomb.

The season of mass commerciality has now seized the mind of the nation in many ways and you can't help wonder where the 'reason for the season' has gone. Christmas would appear to have been hi-jacked, and I can't help but wonder how many of those individuals who have slated Tesco this year with their racist comments will celebrate Christmas with the true Christian spirit of the season. Jesus made no difference with anyone he came into contact with – The Good Samaritan – the woman by the well and the other side as we are sometimes prone to describe those different to ourselves.

Don't get me wrong, Christmas is a very special season and it is a time for families to come together and enjoy the holiday season. Let's not forget what this season really celebrates amid the bombardment of messages and advertising slogans and despite what one of our major electrical retailers would otherwise state Christmas is God's gift of Jesus to a broken world and not a 48 inch Oled television with surround sound.



In our house the Sky advert gets the thumbs up – wishful thinking on our part and nothing to do with Sky or any of their services. Happy Christmas!

By Jeremy Kyle

Waiting for Good News

When Rev Gray told us the little tale of Basil the Branch it transported me way back to a frosty, foggy morning in the late 1960's. I had just begun my teaching career working in Bann House, Portadown and in those early days I travelled by 'bus, arriving well before classes were due to commence.

I very often walked round the back of the building and had noticed a large bush of spotted laurel. We were just starting to develop our new garden and had been watching horticultural programmes to pick up some tips. One of these programmes explained, in detail, the process of grafting. I decided I would give it a try.



I armed myself with a sharp knife; some rooting powder; damp moss; a plastic bag and some raffia. I went through the procedure I had watched on TV and left everything "to take" for a few weeks before snipping the branch off and bringing it home where Bill attached the piece of laurel to an existing bush at the bottom of our garden.

This was a success and we have had a beautiful, large spotted laurel for all these years and the **Good News** in this little tale is that a few years ago our spotted laurel produced lovely bright, red berries. A long time but well worth the wait. *By Esther Cromwell*

Christmas Carol Anagrams

1. Left things in _____
2. Weary man again _____
3. So acknowledge sign _____
4. Hymn hindering good girl _____
5. Where I'm kind in battle _____
6. Half-time cue of loyal _____
7. Divine dainty cosy carol _____



Christmas Quiz

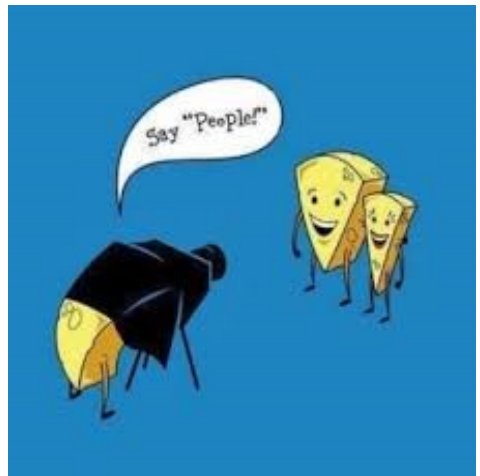
(answers elsewhere in Buzz)



1. What's the name of the period leading up to Christmas?
2. How many Wise Men brought gifts to Jesus?
3. How does Good King Wenceslas like his pizzas?
4. What was the name of John the Baptist's Mother?
5. Who brings presents to children in Holland on the 5th/6th December?
6. How many letters are in the angelic alphabet?
7. In what town was Jesus born?
8. How many presents were given in total in the 12 Days of Christmas?
9. In what decade was the first Christmas Card sent in the UK?
10. What country did the family escape to?
11. How many of Rudolph's eight companions names start with 'D'?
12. What country did Christmas Trees originate from?
13. Who was the 'King of the Jews' who ordered the babies to be killed?
14. What's the second line of "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas"?
15. What was Joseph's job?
16. Who started the custom of Wassailing?
17. Who were first people to visit the baby Jesus?
18. What's lucky to find in your Christmas Pudding?
19. What Angel visited Mary?
20. Where did the baby Jesus sleep?

8 RULES TO A BETTER LIFE

1. NEVER HATE
2. DONT WORRY
3. LIVE SIMPLY
4. EXPECT A LITTLE
5. GIVE A LOT
6. ALWAYS SMILE
7. LIVE WITH LOVE
8. BEST OF ALL, BE WITH GOD



What Makes Good News?

Good news is relative - it is the receiver of the news who determines whether or not the news is good. Good news to one person may be bad news to someone else. The losing of the licence for drink driving is bad news for the driver of the car, but good news for other road users. The breakdown of the tumble dryer is bad news for the housewife, but good news for the tradesman. We all have had our "good news" times. Unfortunately, we sometimes have to pick our brain for the good news whereas the "bad news" times we can recollect without much difficulty! Here are some items of good news.

To the person waiting on the result of blood tests, good news would be to receive the all clear. To the pregnant mother, good news would be a healthy baby. To the student, good news would be pass grades in their examinations. To a person seeking a job good, news would be the securing of employment. To a home buyer, good news would be the making of the last payment on their mortgage. Good news to the car owner who is aware of a rattle under the bonnet would be that the car only needs a hose pipe and not the timing belt replaced. Good news to a journalist is any news that sells his paper. Good news to a restaurateur is customers coming through the door. Good news to the tourist industry is holiday makers. Good news in the court room is experienced by the person who wins the case. Good news for the chocoholic is that there is still one sweet left in the box. Good news to a person who disobeys the law is that he/she hasn't got caught. Some folk would say that Autumn brings the good news of no more lawn cutting, no more hedge cutting and no more weeding.

The mention of Autumn leads me nicely to Winter and on to December 25. Christmas is around the corner and the lights and tinsel and the decorations have appeared in the shops. The turkey and ham and the Christmas pud and sherry trifle are mouth-wateringly close. Christmas means different things to different people but dare I say that for most people the picture of baby Jesus in the manger does capture the imagination. Even for the non-church goer, the Christmas story does appear somewhere on their radar. Two thousand odd years ago the Saviour of the world was born – for the person of faith this is Good News.



A happy Christmas to you and yours, and to all those whom you love.

By Boston Kydd

Can you find the eight differences?



Christmas Traditions and Customs Word Search



The words can be in any direction and backwards!

- CAKE
- CANDLES
- CAROLS
- CRACKERS
- IVY
- MINCEPIES
- PRESENTS
- REINDEER
- SANTA
- TREES
- YULELOGS

C	R	A	C	K	E	R	S	P	I
A	E	F	G	N	T	E	G	B	S
N	I	O	P	R	E	D	O	F	E
D	N	T	D	R	I	V	L	K	I
L	D	S	T	N	E	S	E	R	P
E	E	R	D	H	A	C	L	C	E
S	E	Y	E	C	T	J	U	B	C
E	R	K	V	I	N	O	Y	X	N
K	A	R	G	C	A	I	Y	V	I
C	A	R	O	L	S	R	J	H	M

There is the story of a preacher who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: "I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets."

GOOD NEWS OR BAD NEWS?



“Good news Mum,” yelled Chris as he ran into the kitchen on returning from school. “They’ve posted the team for this year’s football squad. And my name’s on it. I’m in!”

Meanwhile, Kevin trudged slowly home from school with a heavy heart. He hadn’t made this year’s football squad and, although he knew his Mum would say all the right things to him, for Kevin it was the worst news possible.

So often in life what is good news for some will not be so for others. Whether it’s the result of a competition, a sporting event, an examination or an election, there has to be a loser as well as a winner. Someone has to come last. If you’re the winner, you’re often too wrapped up in your success to think about how the loser is feeling. And if you’re the loser, you’re too busy nursing your own wounds to be pleased for the victor.

Sometimes we think something is bad news: perhaps a change of circumstances directs us towards a journey we don’t want to make or takes us out of our comfort zone and presents us with new challenges. But very often we look back on these changes and realise that they were for the best – that God really DOES know what he’s doing, and that the wisest course of action is to let him take the reins.

For most of us at this time of year, the journey towards Christmas is a happy time – a time for meeting with friends, for rushing around frantically shopping for presents, putting up decorations, planning menus, looking forward to family gatherings and parties. For some, though, it can bring sadness, unwelcome reminders of the past, memories of those we have loved and lost, a greater awareness of poverty, loneliness and despair. So let’s make it a time when we, the lucky ones, think about what we can do to make the lives of others a little easier.

However we spend our Christmas, at the heart of it let us remember and share the greatest news of all – the “Good tidings of great joy”, the baby born in a stable, God’s gift of the child who came to earth **for each one of us** – the Saviour of Mankind.

*Jesus
IS THE
reason
FOR THE
Season*

By Alison Warner

NEWS FROM THE PEWS



Congratulations to
George and Rosemary Cox
celebrating their 60th wedding
anniversary



Congratulations to
Cherith and Christopher O'Sullivan
17th June 2017



Impact enjoying a
great night out at
SSE Arena watching
American college ice
hockey tournament.

Bannside's four new elders



Frank Arnold, Ben Matson, Kim McAnespie and Sandra Bickerstaff



Bannside members and friend enjoying a cup of tea after the Ordination and Installation of our four new elders.





PW members enjoying a Christmas night out in the Rosehip.



Messy Church

Families enjoying games, activities, Bible stories and a meal together. Sunday 26th November



Meet the New Elders!

Bannside recently elected four new elders: Kim McAnespie, Frank Arnold, Sandra Bickerstaff and Ben Matson. In so doing, we affirm the gifts of leadership given by God to both women and men and promise them our prayerful support as we begin this new chapter together. Kim and Frank share a bit about their story here; Sandra and Ben will follow in the next edition of Buzz.

Kim McAnespie

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11. This verse came to my mind when I was asked to become an elder. I had no plans in that direction, but God had, and through the congregation's nomination, I was guided further in my journey of faith.

Being an elder carries responsibility and reward. I am looking forward to working with all the people of Bannside and hope that I can give the support and time I feel this position has asked of me. Through eldership, I hope that I continue to learn and grow as a Christian and follow the example of those who have been and are elders.

As the old saying goes, you only get out of life what you put into it, and I am looking forward to my journey ahead. This is the beginning of something new for me. Please keep me in your prayers as I find my way.

Frank Arnold

My journey to the eldership in Bannside began in the early 1980s when I received promotion in my employment and was posted to our Scottish operation based in Glasgow, a decision which would impact on the rest of my life.

I left Ireland as a member of the Church of Ireland and on arrival in Scotland was disappointed to find that location and the service times in the local Episcopal Church were not convenient.

Living opposite a Church of Scotland Manse in Paisley I became friendly with the minister, who invited me to his church and, as they say, the rest is history. I received a very warm welcome and after some time was elected to the Church committee and also became a member of the property committee. Some things never change!

Around this time I met my beloved wife Vianne, and a couple of years later we were married in Alloway Parish Church, a beautiful place of worship where Vianne and her family have a long association.

Later I was proud to be elected and ordained an Elder. Everything in the church was formal, robed choir, and on communion Sundays the elders dressed formally.

The third piece of the jigsaw was being invited to join Rotary, which I thoroughly enjoy.

In 1995 my career path took me back to Ireland, and the 'troubles' were still in full blow. I made the decision to live wherever my wife, who had never lived in Ireland, felt comfortable and after travelling around the Province, Vianne decided on Banbridge, and we purchased the old Bannside Manse on the Dromore Road.

I transferred my membership of Rotary to the Rotary Club of Banbridge. Banbridge Rotary Club at that time had quite a number of Bannside members and Bobby Niblock, never one to miss an opportunity, invited me to visit Bannside, where Vianne and I received a warm welcome and were made to feel very much part of the congregation and local community.

Fast forward twenty two years to Dr Gray inviting me on behalf of the congregation to become an elder in Bannside which brought me full circle, but what a wonderful circle and renewing my commitment to Christian leadership in a place I love to be.

Along with Ben, Sandra and Kim, Dr Gray led us (and settled us down) in a wonderful way as we passed the various Commission of Presbytery hurdles and over the several weeks he took us through 'Prepared to lead' discussions on catechism, the confessions, the role of the elder in an easy and gracious manner, giving us all a tremendous and enjoyable insight to days ahead as officers of the church and in the firm belief that Jesus Christ is Lord and Saviour.

One thing which was not part of the training but stuck in my mind was on the first night when we arrived for training there on the wall was a poster which read:

1. Only speak when you are asked
2. Follow ALL instructions
3. Be kind to each other
4. Be helpful
5. Always try your best
6. Be a buddy not a bully

I have no idea who the author is or indeed who was the intended audience, nevertheless it was those words that broke the ice, and with prayer we set off that evening on the next step in our Christian journey.

Christmas One-liners



Two snowmen in a field, one turned to the other and said "I don't know about you, but I can smell carrots!"

Did you know that Santa's not allowed to go down chimneys this year? It was declared unsafe by the Elf and Safety Commission.

There were two biscuits, on a plate, all ready for Santa to eat. One biscuit decided to go and hide in the biscuit tin as it didn't want to get eaten. As was going to the kitchen, Santa came in and stood on it and all the other biscuit could say was 'Crumbs!'



Answers to Christmas Quiz

1. Advent
2. More than one, the Bible doesn't say how many!
3. Deep pan, crisp and even!
4. Elizabeth
5. St. Nicholas
6. 25; 'no el'!!!
7. Bethlehem
8. 364
9. 1840s - 1843 by Sir Henry Cole
10. Egypt
11. Three - Dasher, Dancer and Donner
12. Germany - it was Latvia but it was part of German then!
13. King Herod
14. Just like the ones I used to know
15. Carpenter
16. The Anglo Saxons - it means 'good health'
17. Shepherds
18. A six pence
19. Gabriel
20. In a manger

Answers to Carol Anagrams

1. Silent Night
2. Away in a Manger
3. Good King Wenceslas
4. Ding Dong Merrily on High
5. In the Bleak Mid-winter
6. Oh Come All Ye Faithful
7. Once in Royal David's City



"Good news from heaven the angels bring,
Glad tidings to the earth they sing: To us this
day a child is given, to crown us with the joy
of heaven."

-Martin Luther



It is not **what** is under the Christmas tree.....
It is **who** is around it that counts!

★
FOR
UNTO US A
CHILD
IS BORN
UNTO US A SON
IS GIVEN
ISAIAH
9:6

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

Celebration of Communion Sunday
7th January, 11.30 and 6.30 service.

