

Fix Your Eyes...

Please Pray

For current and emerging vacancies at Castlewellan ahead of a busy year.

For staff as they deal with Buildings & Maintenance problems arising from the cold weather.

For the bereaved in our staff teams who will find Christmas to be bitter-sweet.

For those concerned about the health of loved ones.

That we all would have the resilience and thrift of former generations as we face global economic pressures.

Give Thanks

For the encouraging response in bookings in the school sector at Castlewellan.

For the 'full to capacity' Advent weekends in Cloverley at the beginning of December, and the rich teaching received.

For the progress in improvement works at Quinta, and the safety of the team working on them.

That Covid is not a news item!!

That Jesus came from heaven, as a servant, to die, to rescue His people ... and that it still moves the hardest heart!

Christmas has a very special appeal. In a world that is committed to the mockery, persecution and eradication of Christianity, somehow, this festival still captures hearts & minds. Yes, we can lament the commercialisation of Christmas, and the lack of the true meaning, but what is it that causes it to permeate all of the western world, against their normal prejudice?

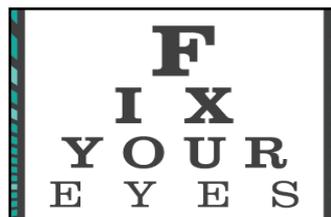
It is supernatural! God became one of us – a human. Our society may be secular, but that doesn't mean that they have lost the eternal hunger that God placed in every one of us, for something more than the here & now. They won't admit it, and they don't understand it, but Christmas pushes a button that most people didn't know they had, and draws them in, almost against their will.

So what do we as Christians do with this opportunity? Will we just complain with everyone else about the queues, the prices and the repeats on TV? Will we just agree that it's all about the kids? Will we moan about missing the point of Christmas, the true meaning? Or will we tap into this special thing that is happening in the hearts of almost all our population, and gently, graciously improve their focus?

What should we do? How do we prepare for the usual conversations that take place around Christmas? How do we move them to a higher plain? How do we help the enquirer to see another line of the eye test?

First of all, *you* need to understand what you want *them* to understand about Christmas:

Jesus came from heaven...as a servant...to die...to rescue us.



Jesus came from heaven – that's why it is supernatural. God came down – not just as an infinite, eternal, unchangeable spirit – but as one of us. Not just to look upon sin and judge it – but to endure all the temptations of man.

Christmas is not about the birth of a great religious leader, as most of those we will encounter believe it to be. This is the prophesied, promised, and patiently awaited coming of God (Micah 5:2).

God, who has persevered with the sin of man for generations, now comes as a man. He dignifies our species and scandalises Himself... *"made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form,"*

Jesus came as a servant – no glory, no ceremony, no privilege. He took on our weakness & vulnerability.

During His transfiguration, His disciples briefly saw His glory as *"His face shone like the sun"*, but the Jesus they followed was not treated like a king – *"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head"*

Jesus came to die – Yes, His

life was one of perfect example, and could be used to consistently teach all His future followers how to live. But He didn't come just to serve, but to give His life as a ransom.

Humbling though a life of service may have been, it could not compare with the journey to the cross & to separation from His Father.

Jesus came to rescue His people – The magic of Christmas is not just that God himself came from heaven as a man; nor just that He humbled Himself as a servant to others. Nor is it even just that He came to die as an ultimate act of service. No. The magic is that He did that to rescue me.

"You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt 1:21)

This was the culmination of God's mission started in Genesis 3 at the fall, and promised throughout the OT. A mission to match the wrong-doing of our rebellion, with the right-doing of Christ's obedience. And this doesn't just explain Christmas – it explains love: *"in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

Jesus came **not to bring us** tinsel and turkey or toys and technology, but He *"suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God"*

Now – what will that do to our conversations? How can we change gear and stop talking about the temperature and the time and the TV, and start talking about the transforming love of Christmas? Is it a case of "Now I've seen Jesus & that'll do me" or "Now I've seen Jesus & you must see Him too"?

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If you would like to receive a regular copy either by e-mail or post, or would like to be removed from the mailing list, please contact us.

www.quinta.org
www.cloverleyhall.org
www.castlewellancastle.org

space to grow



Man looks on the outward appearance

You may wonder why I have included a photograph of a wall in the newsletter? Regular visitors to Cloverley will recognise it as the Courtyard Room (formerly the Snooker Room) and you may even have noticed it had changed in colour. The most observant may also have noticed that the windows have lost their sunken look.

From the outside, thanks to the addition of period light fittings, it looks great, but gives little clue to the extent of the transformation that has gone on under the surface.

Many years ago, this wall was showing signs of deterioration, and the decision was taken to render (plaster) it. The render was painted the same colour as the brickwork it was covering, and everything looked fine(ish).

Over the years some cracks appeared and were filled in. Then more seriously, the window panes began to crack and a noticeable sinkage in the window heads was detected. It was clear that the remedial works had not addressed the internal issue, and indeed had worsened the problem.

The render had covered up the unsightly de-



cay, but it had trapped the moisture in the wall, which led to the rusting of the steel reinforcement in the window heads, decimating their strength.

Jon Berry, supported by Nicky, investigated the problem and devised a solution: New steel rods had to be 'injected' into the existing heads; all the render had to be removed; new lime mortar applied, which would allow the wall to 'breathe'.

The work was carried out, and immediately you could see the difference on the outside. The windows regained their shape and could be reglazed; the finish was a fitting contrast to its surroundings; and we were safe in the knowledge that the inner decay had stopped.

...Just like the Gospel!



Could you be the answer to our prayers?

OUR PRAYER FOR A CHEF

We are seeking God for someone who is a committed Christian and hard-working team player with previous experience in hospitality and catering. You'll join our team as we work together to build a Christian community that is both welcoming and safe, inspiring and challenging and which enables guests and staff to encounter the transformative power of God's love.

The right candidate will attract role flexibility, competitive remuneration and the opportunity to develop both their own skills, and the dining experience at the Castle.

For more information, contact John Nixon at office@castlewellancastle.org or on 028 4377 8733, or check out the news page on our website www.castlewellancastle.org

Hitting the Target!

During the year, Quinta received a legacy from a long-time prayer supporter with strong ties to the Centre. This money has been partially used to transform the Quinta Hall Meeting Room with new furniture and audio-visual equipment, as well as carpeting and lighting.

It is hoped to use the remaining funds to purchase activity equipment for groups visiting the centre to hire, rather than them having to organise from external providers at higher cost. The proposed equipment is Archery Tag. This is a relatively new activity in the UK and is a cross between normal archery and paintballing!

It is played in teams, over a designated area either indoors or outside. Players are equipped with a standard bow but



use arrows with a large 'marshmallow' type tip instead of a point, which does not hurt when it hits someone. Players either aim for an opposing player or some other target. Protective helmets are worn.

I think our benefactor would be amused to see how her gift has been used to bring comfort and pain in equal measure! We are so grateful for this bequest, along with many other donations, received and used to improve the experience of guests using our centres.

Thank You!