



COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION GOOD NEWS LEGACY

2019 ADVENT MESSENGER

When I think of Christmas, I think of two things; Christmas Trees and Santa. Now at first glance, you might think surely that I should be remembering Baby Jesus, carols and well...more churchy things. That is until you know the original stories behind Christmas trees and Santa,

In the early 700's Evergreen forests and trees were seen as gods by some people like the Saxons. A man named Boniface chopped down a tree known as 'the Oak of Thor' to show the people that it was just a tree and not a God to be feared. What I love about this story is that wood from the oak was then reportedly used to build a church – that's a slice of genius on the part of Boniface. From this incident a fir tree grew from the roots of the oak which was taken as the sign of the Christian faith. During the 15th century faithful Christians erected trees in their homes with red apples as a sign of the tree from the Garden of Eden. Martin Luther is once said to have bought a fir tree inside and decorated it with candles as a sign of Christ's birth (I hope he didn't light them all for health and safety reasons.) A few hundred years later this tradition had spread across Europe. The tree has much symbolism. Firstly, the Christmas tree is an evergreen, representing hope. Secondly, its needles always point upward, turning our thoughts to heaven and thirdly the tree is cut down and then erected again, a symbol of Christ's resurrection. A Christmas tree is always placed in the heart of the home, the living area to remind us that Jesus is the centre of our hearts, our homes and our communities.

Santa Claus is based on Saint Nicholas, a Bishop in ancient Turkey. He was very generous to the poor, most often anonymously. He would throw a bag of gold through an open window to a family he knew was in need (legend has that one time this landed in a stocking that was drying over a fire place) hence the stockings and pillow cases we leave out for Santa. He also would put coins in the shoes of those who left them outside. The character of this saint reminds us that we must do good without any desire of recognition or reward. Sitting on Santa's lap in the mall today is a long way from the ancient saint, but has the same heart behind it (although sometimes distorted by materialism.) Giving is important, Santa gives to children as they need (or think they need) and should remind us not of greed or getting but of giving and loving others...

A tree and a man in a red suit can lead us to Jesus in the stable after all. The Tree nudging us to remember to love God with heart, soul and mind and the man in the red suit to remind us to love others as we have been loved. I once heard a great quote about this time of year that said, 'Blessed is the season which engages the whole world in a conspiracy of love.'

Vicar Pete



Christmas Services

Christmas Eve, 24 December

- 4.00pm Christingle Children's Service
@ St Andrew's, Plimmerton
- 8.00pm Community Carols & Communion Service
@ St Alban's, Pauatahanui
- 11.00pm Carols by Candlelight Service
@ St Andrew's, Plimmerton

Christmas Day, 25 December

- 9.30am Family Service @ St Andrew's, Plimmerton



The Messenger is only twice a year with dates for Easter and Christmas services. We would love you join us in celebrating the resurrection and birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have a weekly email sent each Thursday which shares current parish news and events coming up - to sign up please email: pauanglican@xtra.co.nz with the subject line 'subscribe'.

ST ANDREW'S, PLIMMERTON

Service with Children's Program @ 9.30am
Thursday @ 10am Communion Service

ST ALBAN'S, PAUATAHANUI

Community Service @ 11.00am

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