

# salvos

magazine



## A night like no other

Key players tell their side of the Christmas story



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### FEATURE

What Mary knew

### REFLECTION

There's room for us all

### MY STORY

A night like no other

*“The story of Christmas  
is the story of God’s  
relentless love for us.”*

*– Max Lucado*





## The Salvation Army is about giving hope where it's needed most.

### What is The Salvation Army?

The Salvation Army, an international movement, is an evangelical part of the universal Christian Church.

### Vision Statement

Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.

### Mission Statement

The Salvation Army is a Christian movement dedicated to sharing the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice



The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present, and future. We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and well-being of people of all ages, particularly children.

# Salvos Magazine

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**Feature [6]**  
Key players tell the Christmas story

**Reflection [16]**  
The enduring promise of Christmas



**My Story [20]**  
A life of love and joy

## Unconditional love

For many of us, Christmas can just be another stressful season that highlights our lack of time and finances, broken relationships and multiple, complex life challenges. And yet, this is a time of year that, when seen for what it means, reminds us that hope is not a warm fuzzy slogan, but real. Christmas restores assurance and purpose in a world exhausted and struggling in the face of continual personal tragedies and global disasters.

Jesus came to an oppressive and violent earth in challenging and life-threatening circumstances to make a new and eternal life possible for all humanity. He came to restore brokenness, bring freedom and make us whole.

Christmas reflects the hope of a living relationship with this powerful and personal God, both now and eternally. Christmas reaches far beyond the miracle of the baby in the manger – it's all about unconditional love.

This is the hope of Christmas, for all of us, that God is with us – now and into eternity.

On behalf of the Salvos Magazine team, I wish you all an encouraging, meaningful and hope-filled Christmas.

Simone Worthing **Editor**

# Christmas tragics

Some of us can't get enough of the festive season

By Fay Foster

I emailed my friend Simone R recently, asking whether she considered herself to be a Christmas tragic.

She replied: "If you mean do I love Christmas 🌲 and love having Christmas decorations and lights fill my house 🌲 and put them up in October 🌲 and love gift giving 🌲 and have had our manger set for 43 years 🌲 and have a variety of other manger sets 🌲 and one of my highlights was visiting Christmas markets in Europe 🌲"

Then I'm a Christmas tragic 😊"

I understood perfectly. I'm a Christmas tragic too.

Simone, our friend Stacey and I got together to chat online about what we love about Christmas and how we came to be such tragics.

All three of us, all year long, think about Christmas, anticipate it and count down the days. Christmas is never far from our minds. It's a time of year we look forward to; a season of enjoying the moment, creating space for other people, with no expectation of how Christmas 'should' look for anyone.

## KINDNESS AND JOY

What is it about Christmas that makes us so crazy about it? Stacey remembers the lead-up to Christmas as a time when a dark cloud was somehow lifted, when people in her neighbourhood changed and life was as it should be for a short time. As a child, she noticed

the difference in people's behaviour around Christmas. Even in a challenging neighbourhood, people were nicer, more willing to give, more willing to help.

It was okay to dress brightly, and to do that a few weeks before Christmas to make the season last longer. Even when catching buses, people would light up when they saw Stacey's excitement and her bright clothes. "This is happiness, this is joy – I love this!" says Stacey, who still wears her brightest and most Christmassy outfits in December.

"I'm an extreme introvert, even when I'm outwardly very Christmassy. But when someone comments on my



Stacey loves to spread the joy of Christmas with her December outfits.

clothes or starts talking with me about Christmas, my introvert side vanishes. It's like these people are my best friends, even at a train station."

### SPARKLE AND CELEBRATION

For Simone, Christmas is all about hope, joy and seeing other people happy. "I love lights," she says. "I lived in London for three years and loved winter because of all the lights. This year, I'm going on a trip to see the Christmas markets, and maybe buy some German Christmas ornaments."

Simone remembers her mum spreading out colourful metallic-looking Christmas garlands, and she treasures a tree ornament of a Christmas carols book that her mother gave her. As an adult, Simone made the decision to make Christmas full of life, colour and sparkle. She wanted her home to be a place of celebration.

“

**Christmas is not all fluff and no depth; it's about hope.**

”

For me, the thought of this time of excitement, happiness and enjoying the company of family and friends lifts my spirits – even when I spend Christmas Day alone.

### HOPE AND DEPTH

Simone is very aware that Christmas is not a happy time for everyone. "It's still okay to cry at Christmas," she says. "We might cry because we're missing a loved one, or because of things happening in our lives. Christmas is not all fluff and no depth; it's about hope. Not everyone



For Simone, Christmas is about hope, joy and seeing people happy.

has joyful family reunions and celebrations at Christmas, and that's okay. We want Christmas to be real, a reflection of who we are. We can explore our images of Christmas however we want to."

For Christians, Christmas is not about just one day of the year – it's about every day. The birth of Jesus impacts our whole lives. But the Christmas season can still be very special to us.

"When people say they don't like Christmas," says Stacey, "they're often talking about just one day. But Christmas is not the day – it's a season! The whole build-up, the lights, the beautiful, magical atmosphere."

"Don't focus on the expectations of one day," Simone agrees. "Christmas is about so much more than one day."



Scan here for more Stories of Hope.

# What Mary knew

Mother of a different child

By Andrea Redford

I look down at my newborn baby, wrapped up and cosy as he sleeps. I take in the delicate curl of his tiny eyelashes, the gentle rise and fall of his chest as he breathes. I notice the way his little fingers curl into fists, like he's ready for a fight or hanging on tightly to something precious. I could watch him all day.

This is my son, I think. My beautiful boy. I shake my head, still not quite believing the fact that I'm now a mum. So much has happened. So much.

## A BIG SURPRISE

It all started with a visitor at home in Nazareth, an angel sent from God, believe it or not. He said "Good morning", and told me that God had a surprise for me! Excuse me, what? I was confused, alarmed, scared ... you name it.

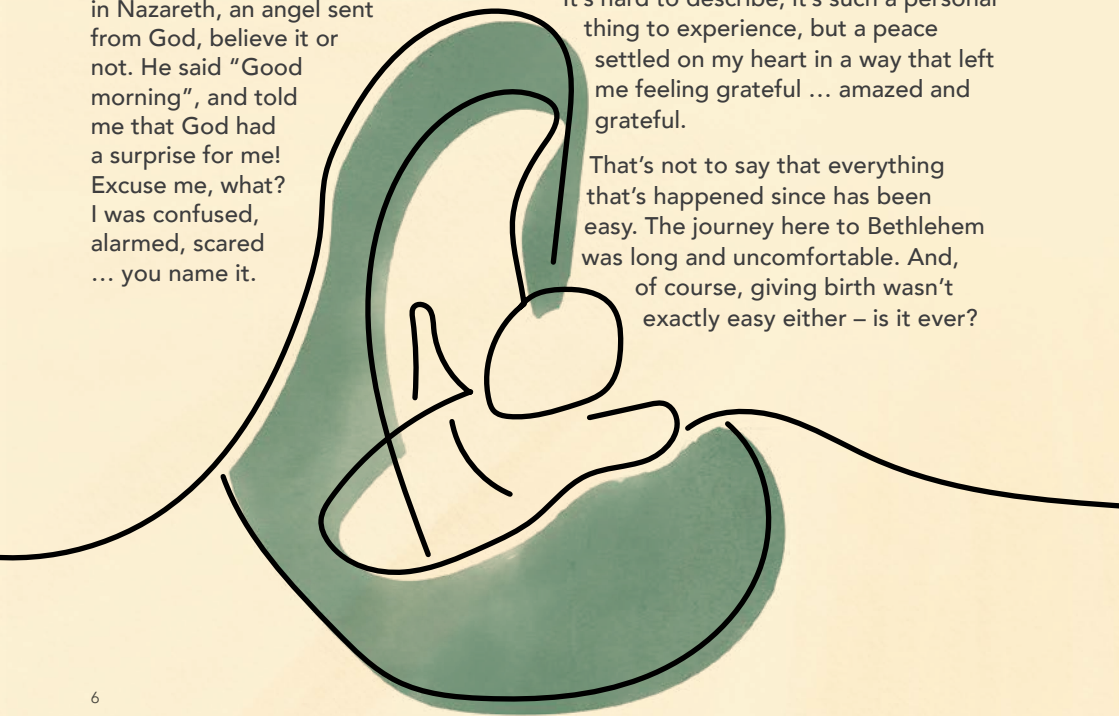
But the angel went on to reassure me that God loves me, that everything would be ok and that I would become pregnant and have a son called Jesus.

And then he told me that my cousin Elizabeth (my very OLD cousin Elizabeth) was pregnant as well. Putting it mildly, it was a lot to take in.

But the thing is, despite how crazy this whole encounter was, how seemingly unbelievable everything he told me was, I did believe. My faith in God has always been a huge part of me, and it didn't leave me in that moment.

It's hard to describe, it's such a personal thing to experience, but a peace settled on my heart in a way that left me feeling grateful ... amazed and grateful.

That's not to say that everything that's happened since has been easy. The journey here to Bethlehem was long and uncomfortable. And, of course, giving birth wasn't exactly easy either – is it ever?



I know, too, that this whole situation has been difficult for Joseph. He is a good man. No, scratch that – he is a wonderful man. Standing by me in our culture? With all its rules about how a woman's life should and shouldn't be? Takes a brave man.

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*I don't know exactly what it all means yet. All I do know is that everything God has said so far has been true.*

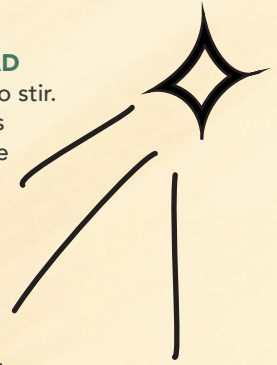
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Not everyone has been kind to me, that's for sure. Hardly anyone showed any grace or understanding for a situation I had no control over. Whatever doubts he's had along the way, Joseph has still trusted God and he's been the friend and partner I needed. I know he saw our life playing out differently. I did too.

But here we are, and everything is exactly as God told us it would be. We are married and have a precious baby to care for. And we are here in Bethlehem, at least for now.

## WHAT LIES AHEAD

Jesus has started to stir. His little head turns from left to right, he arches his back and stretches his arms above his head. He'll be awake soon and ready to be fed.



I treasure these quiet moments and think about all that lies ahead. I smile thinking about the laughter and joy of watching Jesus grow. But I'm realistic; I know that being a mum isn't all sunshine and rainbows. There'll be frustration! Exasperation! And worry. Somehow, I know there'll be great sadness, too.

But it's more than that. The angel told me that Jesus would be a king and would be called the Son of God. And the shepherds who visited us said an angel told them that my little baby is a "Saviour" and "the Messiah, the Lord"!

What incredible things are ahead for Jesus? For all of us? These questions lie deep in my heart; they're hard to stop thinking about.

I don't know exactly what it all means yet. All I do know is that everything God has said so far has been true. Why should this be any different? ▶

# What Joseph dreamed

Changing plans to change the world

By Major Mal Davies

I'm a carpenter. Before I make something I sketch it, check measurements, check angles, select the most appropriate wood for the job, sharpen my tools and then start building. I work to a plan. Even as I'm working, I measure twice and cut once.

My life is the same. Or, at least, it was. I had a plan that included marrying Mary, building my business, having a family, taking on an apprentice or a partner, buying a bigger shed to work in, taking on more staff, retiring old, happy and rich. There it is: my plan.

Then Mary said she was pregnant, and my plan faded into smoke before my eyes and, just like that, it was gone. This was not my plan.

I remembered from my synagogue studies as a boy, a line from the book of Solomon's proverbs that said: "Many are the plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's plans that prevail." So, while I was sad that my big, bold, well-ordered plans had gone, I realised I had to trust in God. Who knows? Perhaps his plan would be better than mine.

## GOD SPEAKS

I briefly considered whether I should hang in there with Mary. I didn't want her to get into trouble, so I wasn't going to make a song-and-dance of it publicly, just part ways quietly. But then I had the dream.

I dreamt that an angel appeared and told me that Mary had not slept with another bloke but was miraculously pregnant by God and the baby would be special. The angel said to call the child Jesus and that he would save people.

To be entirely honest, I didn't know what that meant. But – again – my synagogue studies told me that God had spoken to people through dreams before, people like Jacob and Joseph and Solomon and Daniel. These were important people, so I figured if God gave important messages in dreams, I needed to listen.

## NOT ALONE

So, I obeyed God. Simple as that. Sure, I had doubts, I'm only human. I was especially worried about how I'd go being the father of some sort of saviour, some sort of hero, some sort of champion. But then I also figured that if God had chosen me (and, of course, Mary) then he'd also help me. I didn't have to do this alone.



More so, just when I'd decided that I wasn't good enough to raise a child of God, I remembered that Moses didn't want to lead the Israelites out of captivity, Abraham was too old to lead, Jacob told lies, Samson slept around, King David committed adultery, Jonah ran away from God and so on.

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*In our own strength,  
we're weak and have doubts  
and get it wrong, but with God,  
well, we can do more than we  
can imagine.*

”

In our own strength, we're weak and have doubts and get it wrong, but with God, well, we can do more than we can imagine. God had turned some pretty average people into world changers. I was confident I could get this right. I had this.

Caesar called for a census across the whole Roman empire and so I travelled, with Mary, from my home in Nazareth to Bethlehem, the home of my fathers. While we were there, Mary had the baby. He was a boy. We called

him Jesus. And he was beautiful. With his first breath, I loved him.

I'd done my part. Mary had done her part, magnificently. Now it was up to Jesus to do his part.

I wondered how he would grow. Would he know he was different? Would other boys pick on him? Would I have to protect him, or would he protect me?

So many questions. But now I had a plan; I'd tried it and tested it and it worked, so I'd stick with my new plan. My plan was this: trust God. ▶



# How the angels felt

The world will never be the same

By Major Grant Sandercock-Brown

"It'll never work, you know," said Angelo. He looked sidewise at his companion. Her gaze was focused on the world below and she didn't respond. He cleared his throat. "I said, it'll never work you know," his voice a little louder.

Angelique turned to look directly at him with her golden eyes. "What will never work, Angelo?"

"This plan to save the world. I know that God doesn't make mistakes, but I think he's gotten it wrong this time." He shook his head ruefully. "The son of God as a human baby? It will not work."

## INITIAL SCEPTICISM

Angelique's gaze was unwavering as she responded evenly. "Tell me Angelo, why won't it work? Do you know better than our Father?" Her gaze softened and she offered a gentle smile. "You and I are just junior angels, remember." A twinkle appeared in her eyes. "Are you upset because you didn't make it into the choir that sang to the shepherds?"

Angelo sniffed and lifted his chin. "No. Just because I'm young and unlike Gabriel, don't have a voice like a trumpet, doesn't mean I can't have an opinion." He looked down at the scene that Angelique had been watching. The baby in the manger, the mother who couldn't take her eyes off her baby, and the father making polite small talk with some shepherds. Angelo's doubts rose again. "Look at them Angelique! They're humans. Frail and fallen."

Her voice was sombre as she replied, "Do you think God doesn't realise that? You think he isn't aware of their failings? He created them. He knows each of them by name, for heaven's sake. But that's why he sent his son, Angelo. Because of who and what they are. They need saving!"

“

*There'll be more and more love,  
there'll be more and more hope.*

”

"I know they need saving but that's my point," he replied, lifting his chin once more. "The first time I saw that Adam, I was suspicious. And Eve, well I admit, I had more faith in her. But look what happened. I was right to be sceptical."

## THE JESUS PLAN

Angelique shook her head. "You think God couldn't see the future, Angelo? He freed humans' will, aware that they would choose their own way." She focused on the manger scene once more. "But he always had a plan. And that plan was always Jesus."

Angelo sighed. "I know you keep saying that, but that's my point, a human Jesus doesn't seem like much of a plan. How will it work?"

Angelique's voice softened and her eyes shone as she focused on the baby. "He will be himself, God in their midst. He'll grow up among them, live among them, share their humanity." Her body started to glow, and her voice grew stronger. "He'll show them what it means to truly live. He'll teach them, love them, heal them, and yes Angelo, die for them. He will offer them salvation, and his salvation will change the world."

Still with a stubborn tilt to his chin, Angelo responded, "Change the whole world, Angelique?"

Angelique's face now blazed as her words rang out. "Truly, he will change them with his love. His beloved will remember him and imitate him, and through them, one heart at a time, his love will fill the world. And hope will fill the world. And one day, every knee will bow before Jesus, our Father's only son."

Angelo, transfixed by her, was silent for a moment. And then his shoulders slumped and he whispered, "Oh Angelique, I want it to be true, I do! But how long will a plan like this take?"

Angelique turned her still radiant smile towards him. "It will take a long time. But it will work. There'll be more and more love, there'll be more and more hope. And one day all the earth will know his peace. And until that day, those who love him will need to remember Jesus. They'll need to tell his story to themselves again and again, to never stop proclaiming it and singing it. He is the prince of peace. He's among them, right now, and the world will never be the same again."

And as heaven watched and the echo of her voice faded, the night was silent. ▶



# What the shepherds saw

A night like no other

By Faye Michelson

This little hill just outside Bethlehem is like sacred ground to me because of what happened all those years ago.

It was a night like tonight: clear and cold, with a bitter breeze chilling the bones and making the small fire flicker and sputter. Looking down, I can see the light gradually darkening as the townspeople settle down to sleep. But on that other night, that wonderful night, lights had been dotted all over Bethlehem until late as travellers arrived for the census.

A group of us had been on this very hill that night. Only two of us are left now, the others have died or moved on, replaced by younger shepherds. I look across the fire at him, my old friend, and meet his eyes. He, too, is remembering. It is more than a memory, though, it lives in my spirit like it is happening still. I feel goosebumps on the back of my neck as that night, that magnificent night, plays again in my mind...

"Bethlehem is crowded, thanks to Caesar," one of the men remarked, looking down at the town lights. "I'm glad to be up here with the sheep away from it all."

As the clear, cold night wore on, we watched the lights go out as the townspeople slept. It was quiet, apart from the occasional sheep calling out.

"That's some bright star over there," yawned one of the men, pointing to the town.

## SUPERNATURAL LIGHT

I grunted, not bothering to look. I'd seen plenty of stars after years of guarding sheep at night. I pulled my head scarf more tightly across my face to shield against the wind and gazed into the red and yellow flames.

The flames suddenly became gigantic, their intense colour surrounding us with blazing light. Instinctively we sprang to our feet and saw the brilliant light was not from the fire. A huge, shining celestial being – an angel – seemed to rise from behind the hill, so dazzling we had to shield our eyes. It was the most terrifying, and the most glorious, thing I had ever seen.

"Don't be afraid. I bring you the most joyful news ever announced, and it is for everyone! The Saviour – yes, the Messiah, the Lord – has been born tonight in Bethlehem. How will you recognise him? You will find a baby wrapped in a blanket lying in a manger!"

At that, the sky became even more brilliant as a multitude of angels filled the sky. God's glory blazed around us as they sang, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth to all those who please him."\*

Their exquisite praise echoed around us; surely the whole world had heard it.

We fell to the ground.

They were gone.

## THE FACE OF GOD

For a moment we were speechless, but not for long. We left our sheep and ran to Bethlehem. It seemed as if we had wings on our feet, running, running to find this babe the angel had told us about.

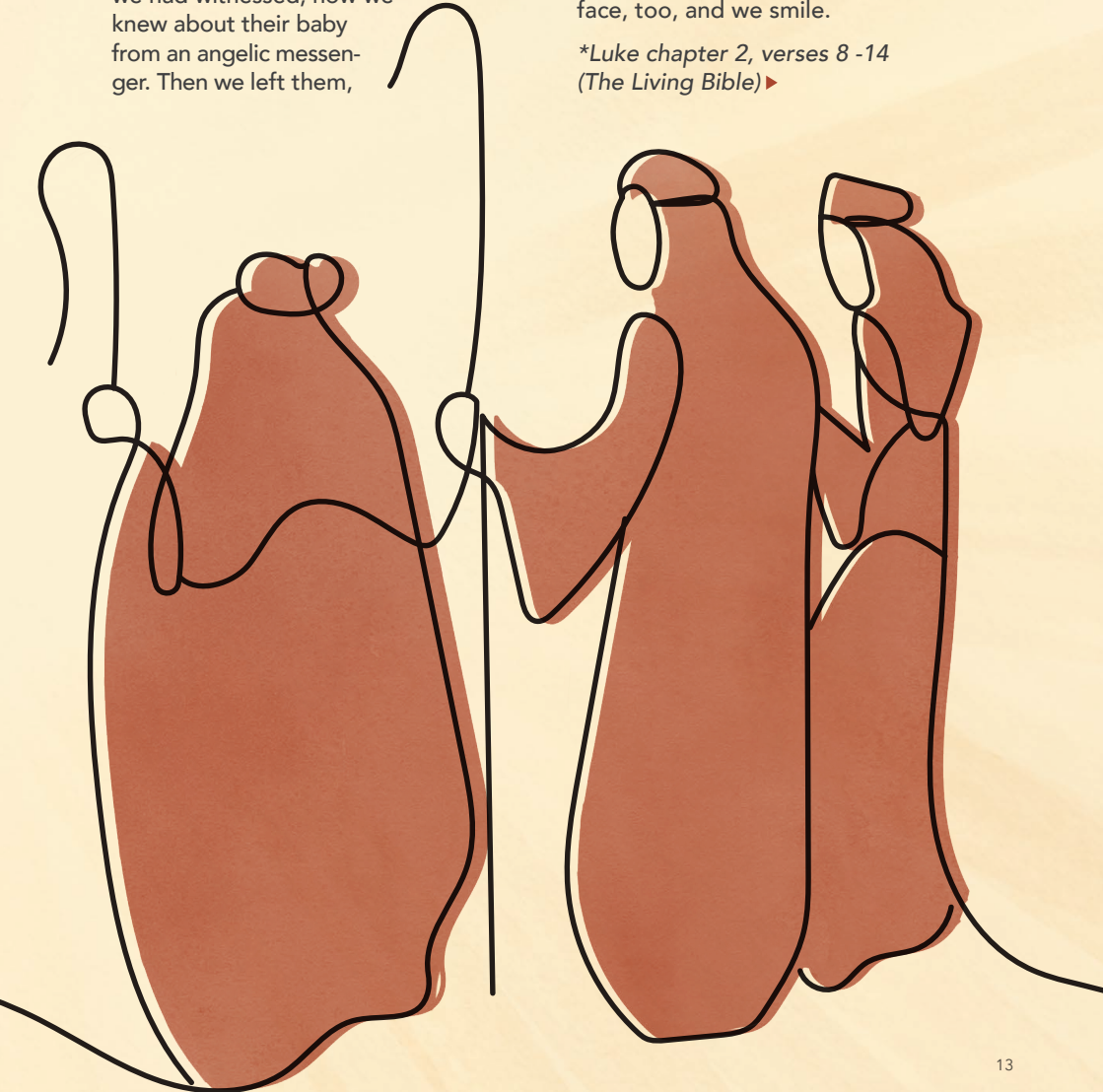
We found him, wrapped in a blanket, lying in a manger, just as the angel had said. We told his young parents what we had witnessed, how we knew about their baby from an angelic messenger. Then we left them,

buzzing with intense joy and gratitude to God. We told anyone who would listen to us what had happened.

I know my life changed that night. When I'd gazed in awe at the tiny face of that babe, I know what I had seen. I had seen the face of God.

I look over at my old friend. I can see the glorious memories reflected in his face, too, and we smile.

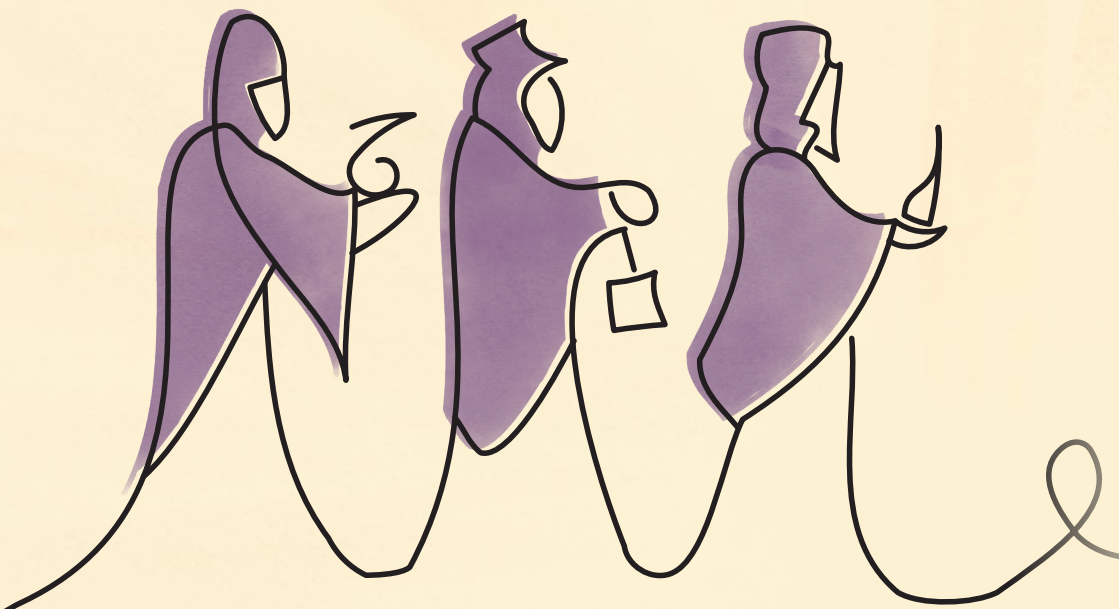
*\*Luke chapter 2, verses 8 -14  
(The Living Bible) ▶*



# Where the wise men went

Finding the boy that would change the world

By Major Phil Inglis



Some might call us consultants, advisors or gurus but I prefer a more descriptive name – ‘wise men’.

Some 30 or so years ago, my friends and I noticed the appearance of a certain star in a certain place. It suggested a subtle but profound shift in reality – a movement of power and authority away from the Romans and towards the Middle East. In the ancient Hebrew stories, we identified prophecies of the birth of a king that would drive this power shift. The stories and the stars together pointed us to Jerusalem as the capital around which this new power would be born and made manifest.

## LONG JOURNEY

This was a bit awkward as we were at war with the Roman Empire, and they were the current rulers of Jerusalem. Nevertheless, we felt that this was so important that we decided to go to Jerusalem. It was a long trip – made longer by the desert, military checkpoints and so on. The border crossing through no man’s land was particularly scary! It’s crazy how much war and violence regularly sweeps across this land.

Finally, we arrived in Jerusalem and went directly to the palace. We told the king all about why we had come and strangely enough, he had no idea what

we were talking about. Frankly, he was a bit weird, paranoid and more than a little disturbed. He didn't really believe us and we feared for our lives, but he called in his own wise men who corroborated our story and, even better, they filled in some of the details we had missed.

They told us that, in fact, the place we were looking for was a few kilometres away, a town called Bethlehem where the ancient King David was born.

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*The stories and the stars  
together pointed us  
to Jerusalem.*

”

We set off to Bethlehem where we were pointed to the home of a family with a young toddler. We were welcomed into the home and, even though it was modest, the power of the place, the significance of the boy was unmistakable. We had travelled through warzones, deserts and all manner of difficulty and now... completely unexpectedly, we were a little out of the way, in a little home with a little family looking at a little boy. The contrast was astounding and made my mind spin. Who would this boy be? What would he become? How will the world change?

### GIFTS FOR A KING

It's always wise to take gifts to those who are going to rise to power and significance. Of course, I brought some gold – that makes sense, right? I mean, I wasn't sure what that little boy would

do with gold, but I understand that his parents took him on a trip to Egypt.

My friends chose frankincense and myrrh to give. Frankincense is used a lot in the temples to anoint people as priests and religious leaders, and myrrh is used extensively in embalming the dead. These are fairly normal gifts for kings – but for this toddler?

But, here we are 30 years later and it turns out we were right. We're hearing rumours of a man from Nazareth who was born in Bethlehem at that time, who has gained an incredible following. Frankincense would be totally appropriate now as he is a gifted speaker, a prophet or a priest, and his words are transforming the ancient Hebrew faith. The key to his teaching seems to be about a shift in wealth and authority – not a shift from Rome to Jerusalem, but a shift from the world to the heavens. Even more incredibly, the myrrh would have been useful too ... I heard that he was crucified, buried in a tomb but then was alive again a few days later! It's all crazy. He's shifted all the value and authority by completely redefining death and life, hope and despair and hate and love.

The problem for me and my friends is, how do we advise the rulers? How do we explain to them this new world? How do we use the stories and the stars to prove the power of God is revealed as this man Jesus? How do we explain the message without seeming like we knew all along?



Scan here for more  
Stories of Hope.

# The enduring promises of Christmas

There's room for all of us

By Kirralee Nicolle

***Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.***

The excerpt from the famous poem above, *The Second Coming*, was written by Irish poet William Butler Yeats in the wake of World War I, unrest in Ireland and the dual Russian Revolutions of 1917. If you remember it, perhaps from school poetry classes, you know that it goes on to describe a 'rough beast' who 'slouches towards Bethlehem to be born'.

It's a bleak poem, borne of a bleak time. Feel familiar?

I'm a lover of poetry. While my classmates groaned over Plath and Owen and Prufrock, I found meaning and a sense of camaraderie in the use of poetry to express feeling, politics, hope, grief.

Yeats' sad tale of a beastly Saviour's birth, while fictional, could easily feel true in this time. War. Famine. Ongoing pandemic. Economic struggles. Housing unaffordability. Conflict and calamity in Jesus' country of origin. There is no room at the inn this year for not just Jesus, but also almost 190,000 of his children waiting for social housing in Australia.

A traditional Christmas dinner surrounded by family is for many a far-off dream, the stuff of paintings and poems and not reality.

“

**There is no room at the inn this year for not just Jesus, but also almost 190,000 of his children waiting for social housing in Australia.**

”

One of the reasons I love poetry is that it tells a story not just of the feelings of the poet, but it can also give us a snapshot of the world at that point in time. For instance, Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* marks a time when poets revelled in a feeling of connectedness to the planet, creativity and joy.



This was a kind of protest aimed toward the Enlightenment-era focus on reason, science and an increasing focus on productivity. In Nigeria, Wole Soyinka's *Telephone Conversation* tells of the frustrating realities of racism in the 1960s.

Reading how suffering has been a constant throughout history can remind us that the sense of hopelessness we may be feeling is not new. Humanity has been facing war, famine, injustice and grief since the beginning of time.

### JOY IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Something I have been pondering this year is what joy looks like in a time of crisis. Where can we still find that satisfaction that really comes from knowing no matter what happens to you, you are loved and your life has meaning. That you really belong.

I find again and again, I come back to Jesus.

Before he died, Jesus comforted his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them to live forever with him. The belonging we find in Jesus is not just metaphorical or spiritual, it is real. We have an actual home with him. And all are invited.

We need more housing solutions. We need to seek justice for all. We need to ensure that wealth inequality, civilian deaths and discrimination against minority groups are all problems that are recognised and addressed with better policies and cultural shifts.

### ETERNITY'S PROMISE

And we do all this with a basis of hope that comes from knowing the promises God has made. He has made room for us, so we can make room for others. He has offered us mercy and grace, and so we



pour that out to those around us. As much as we can, let's imagine this Christmas as a coming together, while the world burns around us, to feast on hope and the promise of community with Jesus.

The late American writer Rachel Held Evans evoked the concept of a feast when speaking of the global church:

"The church is God saying: 'I'm throwing a banquet, and all these mismatched, messed-up people are invited ... This is what God's kingdom is like: a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered at a table, not because they are rich or worthy or good, but because they are hungry, because they said yes.'"

Seeking joy this Christmas just might mean recognising our hunger, coming together and feasting on the enduring promises of God. Community, now that's a radical antidote to hopelessness!



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army services.

# Christmas decorating on a budget

Less cost, more creativity

By Fay Foster

There is something wonderful about preparing our homes for Christmas. Decorating can be fun and very satisfying – and it doesn't have to be fancy, difficult or expensive! Here are a few ideas for family-friendly decorating on a budget.

- Make your own advent calendar. Sew pockets onto a sheet of fabric, or hang numbered kraft paper bags with string or ribbon at different lengths on a door. Or, for children, just write out clues you can give them each morning for where that day's treat is hidden.
- Check out Salvos Stores and other low-cost outlets for Christmas decorations, cushions, door mats, coloured glass items, and table supplies. Their range is usually surprisingly wide, and the costs compare very favourably with other stores.
- Make everyday vases, bowls and jars Christmassy by filling them with ornaments (especially those little baubles that have lost their strings) and anything else that is visually appealing. Choose a colour theme or mix it up.
- Make your own wreath. All you need is a wreath hoop. Loop a scarf around the hoop, pin it in place, and tuck in faux greenery.
- Already have some decorations that you like? Try grouping them in new ways around the house.
- If you buy a real Christmas tree each Christmas, consider an artificial tree that will last for many years. This might cost more initially but will save money in the long run.
- Check the ground around local trees for free branches and twigs and use them to make wreaths, garlands and bouquets. Greenery looks great in vases, jars and bottles, standing in a corner, or as a table piece surrounding a candle.
- Look out for pine cones in local parks. In Australia, they usually fall between December and March. Put them in the oven for 45 minutes at 200 degrees to kill any bugs lurking inside, or freeze them in airtight containers or plastic bags for at least 24 hours, then let them thaw naturally. A pile of pine cones – natural, spray-painted and/or glittered





– placed in a basket or bowl make a lovely tabletop or floor decoration.

- Bring out candles of any size that you have stashed away. If they are nearly burnt out, fill the top of the container with hot water, empty the wax and refill the container with anything you have lying around the house – pebbles, lights, marbles, baubles or new candles.
- Get the family involved in making and hanging paper chains – all you need is some coloured paper, safety scissors and sticky tape or staples. Cut strips of paper that are all the same length and width, or use a streamer roll cut into equal lengths. Staple or tape one piece to make a ring, then loop the next piece through and make it into a ring. Keep doing this until the chain is the length you want. Hang the chains from the tree, from the ceiling or from corner to corner of the room.
- Sheets of A4 cardboard can be used as placemats. Get the family to draw or stick Christmassy pictures on them for a personal touch.
- Let children decide where to place or hang the decorations they inevitably make at school in December.
- Involve the whole family in as much decorating as possible – you are creating great memories!
- Check out the after-Christmas sales for bargains ready for next Christmas.



Scan here for more information on the Salvos Moneycare financial services.



# A life of love and joy I never knew existed

Jason's Christmas story

**Every year, Jason dedicates three days of work leave to join a team packing thousands of candle bags to sell at Sydney's Carols in the Domain. Together with his youngest son, he then volunteers during the event, selling and distributing candle bags to support The Salvation Army's work helping others in need. For Jason, this experience is full of joy, connection and care – a far cry from many Christmases he spent isolated, alone and struggling with addiction.**

## Jason shares:

The Salvos took me in just before Christmas in 2000, and that's when my life started to change.

I grew up always feeling unaccepted. There was a lot of alcohol in our family and life hurt as a kid. Other people loved coming to our house, but all I wanted to do was get out of there.

When I was about 12, I caught a sibling drinking, and they made me drink some of the alcohol so I wouldn't tell my parents. I loved it! It took the pain away. After that, I'd drink whenever I could.



## A HELPING HAND IN TOUGH TIMES

By the time I was 30, I had kids but couldn't see them. I was sleeping on trains overnight and I used to go to 12-step meetings in Sydney just to get a meal.

One day it was raining, and a bloke there asked if I wanted a lift. I never usually took anything from anyone because I thought they wanted something from me. I ended up going to his place to clean up. The next day, he got me into a men's home, and a couple of days later, I was in a Salvation Army [drug and alcohol] rehab service. I never saw that bloke again, but I probably wouldn't be here today if he hadn't done that for me.

Rehab was hard, but I knew I would die if I didn't do something different. I was 58 kilos when I arrived and I was full of anger and attitude.

I had no church or faith growing up, but I went to a Salvation Army church through rehab and I soon loved it. I didn't know there was this other life people lived. I thought everyone drank and carried on.

The Salvos church had an Alpha course about to run, exploring Christianity. My



**A DIFFERENT CHRISTMAS**

I'd spent many Christmases alone. It was just another day, maybe alone on a river-bank or in a rundown fruit picker's hut.

Christmas is amazing now. It is completely different! I've got three great kids and two grandkids in my life. My wife also has a big, loving family and has heaps of Salvos 'aunts' and 'uncles' from growing up in church.

I love helping at the carols. I give it everything I've got from morning to night.

If you help others, you aren't worried about your own problems. I know the money goes to homelessness and people struggling, which is really important.

It's also great to volunteer with my youngest son.

Life is so good now. It wasn't through my doing. It must have been some higher power that put me here. It must have been God!

counsellor told me to do it, but I said, 'no.' He said, 'just go and say how you feel and see what happens.'

“

**I decided to explore what these people had because I wanted some of it!**

”

In the middle of the course, we had a weekend away with Salvation Army people and a few blokes from rehab. I had the best time of my life and realised I didn't have to drink to have fun. We talked, laughed, played Trivial Pursuit and Monopoly – it was an awakening for me. I decided to explore what these people had because I wanted some of it!



Scan here for more information on Salvation Army services.

# Melon lemonade



## Ingredients

8 cups cubed watermelon (or rockmelon or honeydew),  
1 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice,  
1 cup sugar, 4 cups water, fresh mint  
sprigs for garnish

## Method

- Blend half of watermelon until smooth.
- Strain through a fine-mesh strainer. Repeat for remaining watermelon.
- Strain lemon juice to remove pulp and seeds.
- In a large jug combine cold water, watermelon, lemon juice and sugar until sugar is dissolved.
- Add ice if serving immediately or store covered in the refrigerator for up to two days.
- Serve garnished with mint.

# HAVE A LAUGH



Which of Santa's reindeer  
has the best moves?  
Dancer.

Do snow globes ever get scared?  
No, but occasionally they get shaken.

What did one Christmas  
tree say to the other?  
You need to lighten up.

Why does The Grinch enjoy gardening?  
He's got a green thumb.

# SIGNING IN



# Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

			7		9	5		
		8			5		1	
		2	4		6		8	
					8			
			1	5	2			
		1		9				5
						3	4	
				2				1
1		7				2		



## Quick quiz

1. What colour are mistletoe berries?
2. In which year was the first Christmas card sent?
3. Which ocean can Christmas Island be found in?
4. What is the name of the period leading up to Christmas?
5. Which famous scientist was born on Christmas Day in 1642?

## Tum-Tum

On which page of this week's *Salvos Magazine* is Tum-Tum hiding?



## Bible byte

"I bring good news, news of great joy, news that will affect all people everywhere."

Luke chapter 2, verse 10  
*The Voice Bible translation*

Tum-Tum: is hiding in a box on page 21.

4. Advent. 5. Isaac Newton.

Quiz answers: 1. White. 2. 1843. 3. Indian Ocean.

**During the Christmas season, nearly 28 sets of Lego are sold every second.**

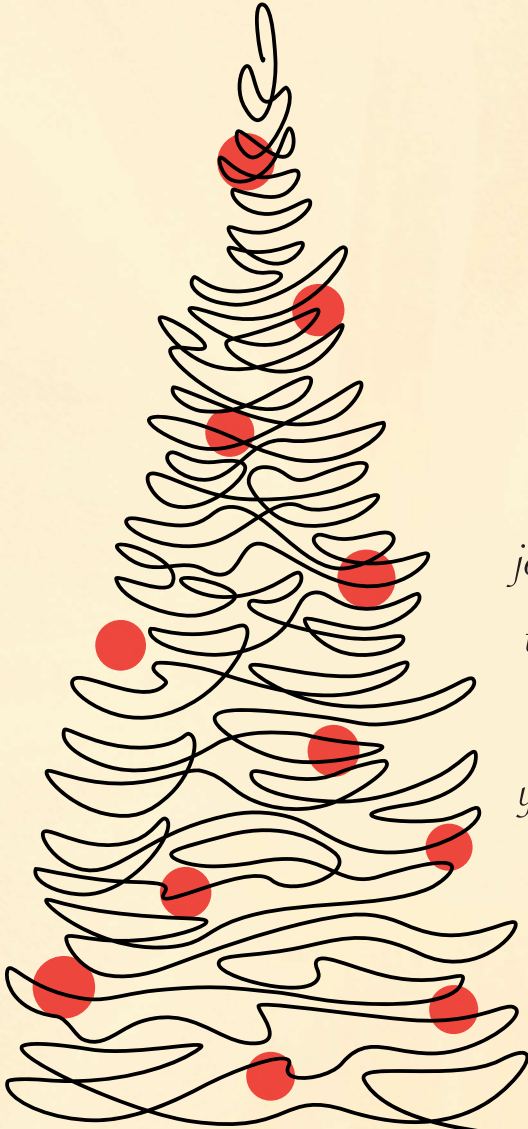
**Assuming Rudolph was in front, there are 40,320 ways to rearrange the other reindeer.**

**The earliest known Christmas tree decorations were apples. At Christmastime, medieval actors would use apples to decorate paradise trees (usually fir trees) during 'Paradise Plays', which were plays depicting Adam and Eve's creation and fall.**

**In Germany, Heiligabend, or Christmas Eve, is said to be a magical time when the pure in heart can hear animals talking.**

**DID YOU KNOW?**

1	3	7	8	6	4	2	5	9	
4	8	9	5	2	3	6	7	1	
2	6	5	9	7	1	3	4	8	
8	2	1	6	9	7	4	3	5	
9	4	3	1	5	2	8	6	7	
7	5	6	3	4	1	8	1	9	2
5	7	2	4	1	1	6	9	8	3
6	9	8	2	3	5	7	1	4	
3	1	4	7	8	9	5	2	6	



*It's been a tough year for many Aussies. As Christmas 2024 approaches, may the enduring hope and deep joy of Christmas penetrate the darkness and fill your home with celebration, your heart with peace and assurance, and your life with love.*

*From the Salvos Magazine team.*