

# The Connector

Vol. 1

A Meeting Place Magazine

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**TIME** - Ruled by the sun, it takes charge of our very existence. Everything we do is governed by it. It is elusive and slips away unnoticed if we don't watch it carefully, and once gone, it can never be retrieved.

We get caught up like flies in its web and dance to its monotonous melody, which goes on without a break carrying us along with it.

We cannot live without time. But instead of allowing it to rule us, we can take it and mould it to our own purposes. We can use it to explore and develop the talents God has given each one of us to the fulfilment of our lives and bless the lives of others. Please grasp a handful of time to grab a cup of coffee, relax and enjoy the first edition of **The Connector**.

**Chris Laughton**



## What's on?

Monday:	6.30 am - 7.30am	Prayer & Meditation
Tuesday:	9.30 am - 11.30 6 pm (1st Tues)	Little Treasures Playgroup Worship & Wait
Wednesday:	1.30 pm	Social Indoor Bowls
Friday:	9 - 12 noon	The Op Shop and Cafe
Saturday:	9 - 12 noon 4 pm	The Op Shop and Cafe Red Dirt Church
Sunday:	12.30pm (1st Sun )	Red Dirt Church

**The GARDEN:** We now have a beautiful tranquil garden thanks to Dennis, Dell and friends, where people can find a space for reflection and welcome.

**The Op Shop and Cafe will be  
CLOSED from Sunday 15th Dec.  
and REOPEN Friday, 10th Jan, 2020**

# THE CHRISTMAS STORY

BY CHRIS LAUGHTON

Thomas had awoken at 4am on Christmas morning. Quite reasonable for a 10 year old. The usually well behaved boy ran through the house yelling, "It's Christmas! It's Christmas!" not even considering that his parents might have wanted to sleep a little longer. He raced into the lounge room followed by his bleary eyed mother and father. He fell at the foot of the Christmas tree and began tearing open his presents.

"Don't you want to wait for Grandpa?" Asked Dad.

"Oh, he can see everything later," retorted Thomas as he came to the last of his many presents. He ripped it open, eyes wide in anticipation. Then his face fell as he allowed the gift to fall to the floor.

"What's the matter son?" asked Dad.

"Where is the new Smart Phone you said I would get if I was good?"

"Thomas, you know things are a bit of a struggle at the moment."

Hot tears ran down the boy's disappointed face as he left the house and ran to the granny flat at the back. He knew Grandpa Andy would be awake. Thomas didn't think the old man ever slept. He was always tapping and banging, working on one of his new inventions. This Christmas morning was no different.

Thomas burst through the door and there was his grandpa, dressed in his white scientist's coat as usual. His white hair stood out like he'd just received an electric shock. The old man was attaching wires and tubes to an old two seater cane chair. On the seat in between the cushions was what looked like some kind of motor with dials, levers and buttons on top, and a computer screen jutting out in front, facing the seats.

"Come in my boy," welcomed Grandpa. "I've been expecting you."

"You have?" exclaimed the boy, though he shouldn't have been surprised as the old man always seemed to know what Thomas was doing and how he was feeling.

"I have a surprise for you," said Grandpa. Thomas's tears stopped immediately. Perhaps Grandpa had bought him a smart phone.

"Quickly boy, we have no time to lose." Before he had time to give the smart phone another thought, the boy's grandfather ushered him to the cane chair, sat him down and belted him in. Belting himself into the adjoining seat he said, "Hold tight boy. We are going on a journey."

The old man pressed buttons, moved the levers and gear stick. An arial emerged from the top of the computer. Rising to above their heads, it began to spin producing four more antennas, all of them spinning anti-clockwise. Dials appeared and glowed on the screen, flashing red, blue, orange, green and yellow.

"It works! It works! Hold on my boy."

Thomas gripped the arm of the chair.

"What is this, Grandpa? What's happening?"

"It's a Time Machine, Thomas. We are going to visit the past, and as it's Christmas, I thought *Israel* would be appropriate.

Hold on boy. This might get a bit rocky."

He pressed a button. The screen cleared and the word *Israel* appeared.

Thomas blinked and the room began to spin until it was no more. The antennas whirred and the colours merged becoming light and then dark. All the boy could do was grip the arm of the chair, with his mouth and eyes wide open. Grandpa Andy chuckled as he pulled another lever and pressed a button and the Time Machine began to slow down. Light became dominant as they came to rest in a shallow cave hidden by a rocky entrance.

As Thomas fumbled his way out of his seat, Grandpa handed him a strange, striped shirt to put on over his pyjamas. The old man put a similar one over his own clothes.

Peeking over the rocks that sheltered them, the pair noticed that they were half way up a hill. At the bottom, on a dusty road, was the biggest crowd of people Thomas had seen in a long time. They stretched out along the road as far as the eye could see. Most seemed to be travelling in the same direction towards, what looked like, stone buildings in the distance.

"Look there!" Said Grandpa excitedly. He pointed in the direction of a man who was leading a donkey with a young woman perched on its back. That had to be Joseph and Mary heading for Bethlehem to be counted in the census.

"Come on Grandpa. Let's go and say hello." Thomas clambered over the rocks and headed down the hill with the old man hot on his tail. By the time they reached the road, the man, the woman and the donkey had moved further ahead and were almost swallowed up by the crowd. They pushed on with the crowd trying desperately to catch up to the pair with the donkey. Before they knew it, the sun had set and they were among the stone buildings

of Bethlehem. The streets were very busy with people speaking and shouting in a language Thomas didn't understand. There was a lot of dust and the smell of camels and donkeys was less than pleasant. For a while they lost sight of Joseph and Mary. Then they heard a door slam and were just in time to see the pair and their donkey being turned away from an inn. They ran to catch up, only to be hassled by the crowd again.

"Look out boy!" Cried Grandpa as he pulled Thomas out of the way of an unhappy looking camel. Again they got pushed and shoved by the crowd and lost sight of their quarry.



“Look over there!” Thomas looked to where Grandpa was pointing. There, in the blackness of the night was the largest, most beautiful star the boy had ever seen. “The star of Bethlehem!” he shouted, jumping to his feet. The *real star* that guided the wise men and the shepherds to baby Jesus.”

“Let’s follow the star boy,” laughed Grandpa.

Of course, Thomas knew the story and knew where the star would lead. But this was real, not just a story. They were going to see the real baby Jesus.

Tired and confused as to their whereabouts, the pair finally sat down on the edge of a well.

“What do we do now, Grandpa? Do you think we should go home?”

“Not yet, Thomas,” smiled Grandpa.

Thomas held Grandpa’s hand as they made their way to the stable where Mary had given birth to her baby boy. Thomas didn’t notice the smell of animals in the stable where Mary sat with Joseph and showed off her beautiful baby boy to the shepherds. He was too taken by the peace that radiated from the infant who was cosily snuggled into an animal’s feeding trough. He could have sworn the the baby Jesus smiled at him. Mary certainly did.



“I think we’d better go now,” whispered Grandpa, reluctantly, Thomas whispered goodbye to those in the stable and they made their way back to the Time Machine.

“One more very quick stop before we go home,” said the old scientist as he pressed buttons and pulled levers as before. The screen appeared, antennas spun. Colours swirled in a whirl of time. Then the machine stopped.

They were on top of a hill. Grandpa pointed to the opposite hill. There were three crosses on that hill, each bearing a dying man. Their attention was drawn to the man in the centre. Tears caught in the boy’s throat as he realised that this man was the baby they had just seen in the stable. This was God’s gift to mankind, His only son. Thomas had seen the infant Jesus. Now he saw the baby, grown to a man and dying on a cross.

Grandpa took out his tissues and wiped away his grandson’s tears.

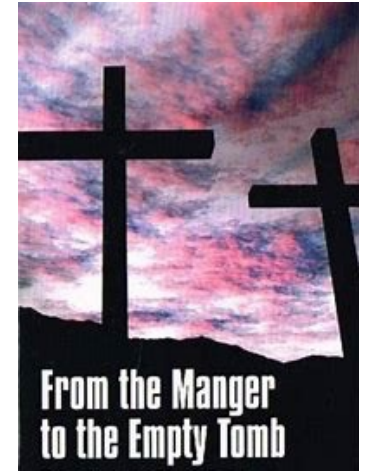
“Don’t be sad, boy. Jesus did that for you and me and for anyone else who believes in Him. He took the punishment for our disobedience instead of us. Cheer up boy. The story has a happy ending.

Grandpa pressed a button. The antennas whirred three times. When they stopped, Thomas saw a tomb with the stone rolled back. Jesus was standing outside the tomb talking to a woman.

The old man chuckled as he brought the Time Machine to life and set the dial for home.

“You see, Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive for evermore and because He is alive, we also will live forever. Isn’t that the best gift ever?”

Thomas had to agree. He felt so bad that he’d been so selfish over the smart phone. He couldn’t wait to get home to give his mum and dad the biggest hug and say he was sorry. Then he could celebrate Christmas Day with them and Grandpa Andy and remember the birthday of the precious baby Jesus.



***Let us praise God for His glorious grace, for the FREE gift He gave us in His dear Son! Ephesians 1:6***

## The Blessing Tree

**For a young couple whose business had failed, there was little money to spend at Christmas. They were going to have to move out of their house in the new year, but they didn’t want their Christmas to be spoiled because of it. So they decided to throw a party. When the guests arrived, they saw a cedar tree decorated with one string of lights and small rolled-up pieces of paper tied to the branches with ribbon.**

**“Welcome to our ‘blessing’ tree,” they said to their guests. Even though we’ve been through hard times, God has blessed us in so many ways that we decided to dedicate our tree to Him. Each piece of paper describes a blessing He has given us this year.”**

**The couple have faced more more trials since then, but they often remark that the Christmas with the ‘blessing’ tree was one of their most memorable. They could testify as Mary did. “My spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.....He who is mighty has done great things for me.”**

**(Luke 1:47-49)**

*Whatever your difficulties, they needn’t spoil Christmas. Like this young couple, look for ways to share His blessings with others - perhaps you could make your own ‘blessing’ tree.*



# MARY, IT'S A BOY!

BY DAVID CHRISTMAS

Damn Caesar!

If he wants to know how many subjects he's got, why doesn't he come and count them for himself instead of making us go home to sign up.

Home! I haven't lived in Bethlehem for years and now we have to come home for some stupid Roman census.

What a time to travel. Talk about traffic jams! Donkeys nose to tail all the way from Dan to Beersheba. And as for accommodation, NO VACANCY signs everywhere.

What's that Mary? You're getting pains? Maybe it's the salt fish you had for supper. You don't think so? Well you'll have to hold on.

Look, it won't be long before we reach Bethlehem. There will be a room at the inn. Look there's the sign - *'The Rod and Staff'*!

Hello Landlord. Yes, Joseph and Mary, we booked a room.

What do you mean, **no** room? I wrote a week ago. You haven't received my letter? Damn Palestine Post.

Look, Mary's started labour, she must have a bed. Well throw someone out then. She's going to give birth!

The stable? I can have the stable! You've got to be joking. OK, I suppose it's better than nothing. I'll write to the Tourist Hotel Association about this.

My oath, look at it. Rats, fleas - mind where you're putting your feet dear. Yes, I know the straw is scratchy. Now, breathe steadily; in - out, in - out just like you learnt.

Hold on - push now! Is there any hot water?

Damn Caesar!

Mary, IT'S A BOY!



AS HE TOUCHED THE WORLD WITH HIS LOVE,  
MAY HE TOUCH YOUR WORLD WITH JOY.

# EASY RECIPES FOR CHRISTMAS

## EASY PEASY FRUIT CAKE (June Dickinson)

### INGREDIENTS

600g mixed dried fruit,  
150g diced dried dates,  
2 cups S.R. flour,  
1 rounded teaspoon baking powder,  
2 cups strong black coffee.

### METHOD

Soak fruit and dates in coffee over night in medium bowl. Stir in sifted flour and baking powder. Mix with wooden spoon until combined. Pour mixture into a paper lined spring form tin. Bake at 180 deg (or 160 deg. fan forced oven),

for 1 hour or until a skewer comes out clean. Decorate with glazed cherries if liked.



## SHORT BREAD (June Dickinson)

### INGREDIENTS

250g butter, 2 cups pl flour, 1 cup cornflour, 1 cup icing sugar.

### METHOD

Sift all dry ingredients into melted butter. Press into biscuit shapes, place on well greased tray and prick with fork. Cook in moderate oven (180 deg.) for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown.

## BUMBLE BEES (Chris Laughton)

### INGREDIENTS

1 packet ginger nut biscuits, 1 cup desc. coconut, 1 tin condensed milk.

### METHOD

Crush biscuits into crumbs. Mix all ingredients together and roll into balls. Roll balls into more coconut and put into patty papers. Place in fridge to set. Add chopped fruit for variety.

## GINGER CARAMEL TARTS (Chris Laughton)

On tray, heat individual ginger nuts for 2 to 3 minutes. Press the heated biscuits in the centre to make a dent. Fill each biscuit with caramel (tinned) and decorate with coloured sprinkles, M and M's or swirls of cream.

Jesus said, " I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry." John 6:35

## THE ANSWERING MACHINE

What if God decided to install an answering machine? Imagine praying and hearing this!

Thank you for calling my Father's house. Please select one of the following:

*For requests — press 1*

*For thanksgiving — press 2*

*For complaints — press 3*

*For all other requests - press 4*

And what if God used the familiar excuse, "All angels are helping other customers right now. Please stay on the line. Your call will be answered in the order it was received."

Can you imagine getting these kind of responses as you call on God in prayer.

*If you would like to speak to Gabriel — press 1*

*If you would like to speak to Michael — press 2*

*For any other angel — press 3*

*If you would like King David to sing a Psalm — press 6*

For reservations at my Father's house, simply press the letters **JOHN** and the numbers **316**.

For answers to nagging questions about the extinction of dinosaurs, and the whereabouts of Noah's Ark. **"WAIT TILL YOU GET THERE!"**

Do you have a story, a poem, an interesting article, or something you would like us all to know about?

This is a community magazine and we would value your input.

See Chris, or email your article to:

**terrchristin@gmail.com**

## THE PIG AND THE COW

A pig was lamenting his lack of popularity. He complained to the cow that people were always talking about the cow's gentle and kind eyes, whereas his name was used as an insult.

The pig admitted that the cow gave milk and cream but maintained that pigs gave more. "Why," the pig complained, "we pigs give bacon and ham and bristles and people even pickle our feet. I don't see why you cows are esteemed so much more."

The cow thought for a while and said gently, **"Maybe it's because we give while we're still living!"**

## THE MOST INEXPENSIVE GIFT - A SMILE!

A smile costs nothing.... but gives much. It enriches those who receive, without making poorer those who give. It takes a moment.... but the memory of it can last forever.



A smile creates happiness in a home, rest to the weary, cheer to the discouraged, sunshine to the sad and is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away.

Some people might be too tired to give you a smile. So give them one of yours, as none needs a smile so much as he who has no more to give.

## Christmas Trivia Quiz.

1. Where do Christmas trees originate from?
2. What is the period leading up to Christmas called?
3. Mistletoe has what colour berries?
4. In the Charles Dickens' novel A Christmas Carol, who was Scrooge's dead business partner?
5. In the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" what is given on the 7th day?
6. In which ocean is the North Pole located?
- 7 Who were the first people to visit baby Jesus?
8. Which sporting event begins on Boxing Day?
9. What Australian Christmas tradition began in Melbourne in 1938?
10. In what country did Silent Night originate?

*Having Trouble completing the quiz?  
Find the answers on the Meeting Place Notice Board!*

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of the One who was sent to bring life to the world.

# THE FIRST CHRISTMAS TREE

More than 1200 years ago, an English missionary named Winfred tramped through the forests, of what is now Germany, preaching about Jesus and telling the people to stop their pagan worship.

It had been a bad year for the residents of that area. Plagues had killed many people. Bad storms had ruined crops. The heathen priests decided that Odin, the false god they worshiped, had to be appeased. They chose a young boy to offer as a human sacrifice!

In the dark of midnight the heathen priests gathered in the forest by a huge oak tree they thought was sacred. Just as they raised the knife to kill the terrified boy, a voice rang out, "Stop, in the name of Jesus Christ!"

Winfred and six of his followers stepped into the clearing by the great oak tree. Ignoring the angry threats of the priests, Winfred sank his axe deep into the oak tree. Again and again the missionary's axe flew, until the great tree crashed to the forest floor.

Horrified, the priests and the people waited - but nothing happened. They expected their gods to punish this intruder who had chopped down their sacred tree. Silence fell over the forest as the people realised their gods were powerless after all.

Winfred stepped forward and started to tell about the one true God and His Son, Jesus. The people listened and believed.

Then, where the mighty oak had fallen, Winfred planted a young fir tree. The evergreen, he explained, was a reminder of God's everlasting love.

Today, Christians all over the world decorate fir trees at Christmas time to celebrate the birth of the Saviour whose love banished fear and superstition for ever.



# CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

## HOLLY

During the Middle Ages, the red berries of holly were believed to keep witches at bay and its evergreen leaves symbolised eternal life. The plant, however, has long been associated with Jesus Christ; the red berries, His drops of blood, and the prickly leaves, the crown of thorns.



## THE WREATH

Traditionally intertwined with red ribbon for festivity, in the Christian tradition the wreath's evergreen leaves represent everlasting life that Jesus Christ's birth promised, while the circular shape recalls the crown of thorns placed on His head.

## STOCKINGS

Apparently, St. Nicholas was concerned about the plight of three desperately poor sisters and one night, he dropped three gold coins down their chimney. The coins fell into the girls' stockings, hung up to dry by the fire, and hopefuls have been hanging stockings ever since.

## SANTA CLAUS

St. Nicholas, or 'Sinta Klaas' as the Dutch called him, was a 4th century bishop of Myra and the original Santa Claus. He was renowned for his piety and compassion and became the patron saint of many places and people; in particular sailors and children.

## CHRISTMAS CARDS

A well known London art dealer, Henry Cole, invented the Christmas card in 1843 as a simple token of friendship. He believed that everyday things should be beautiful, as well as useful, and commissioned the artist J.C. Horsley to design the first card.