

## Vicar's Pastoral Letter

**Date :** December 2007 & January 2008  
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**Subject :** Receiving God's gifts at Christmas and holding onto them throughout the year.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the season of giving and receiving! Even at my age I love to unwrap my presents on Christmas Day and it's good to know that my childhood excitement and anticipation hasn't entirely left me! I hope it never does and that the same is true for you. It's great to receive gifts but it's also great to give them and one of the joys of Christmas is watching others, especially children, as they open their presents. But, as we always tried to teach our girls, it's so important to say thank you and that is what I want to do now because over the last month both St Denys' and St Mary's Churches have received the most wonderful gifts of generosity from the communities that we are here to serve. The Gift Days at both churches have each raised well in excess of £9,000 and offerings are still coming in. **I want to say a huge THANK YOU to each and every person who has given so generously for the continuation of our life and witness in these parishes.**

It is truly astounding but a wonderful encouragement and endorsement for all that we represent and try to accomplish for God. As I have detailed previously the ongoing expenses of our churches are very considerable but your contribution and the contributions of those who regularly give will make a significant difference in us being able to pay our way. Our financial needs are great and continue to rise each year and it may well be that such Gift Days become a regular part of our church life but, for now, please be assured that you have made a big difference. **THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN.**

When someone gives us a present it's not just the gift that matters but all that it represents and all that it says in terms of "I love you" and "I care for you because you're important to me." And that's what God did when He sent His Son, Jesus, into this world because that little baby born in that stable 2,000 years ago was God saying to each one of us today, right now, "I love you and I care for you because you are so precious to Me." God didn't just tell us how much He loved us: He actually showed us by giving us Jesus and showed us again when Jesus died for us on the Cross and rose again. **Jesus is God's living proof that He loves each and every one of us and He is the greatest gift that will ever be given to this world.**

It's good to receive but it's also good to give and that is no less true of God because like any loving parent God loves to give in order to make His children happy. Just imagine how happy it made God to give us Jesus as our Saviour! And that gift, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, is meant to be unwrapped by you and me and, not only unwrapped, but loved and embraced. The children who come to our Christmas Day service often come clutching their new toys and they hold on to them as if they're the most precious things in the world. Well, Jesus **is** the most precious thing in the world and we should hold on to Him just as tightly. **Please don't let go of God this Christmas by discarding His Son as soon as it's over. Hold on to God just as He longs to hold on to you.**

God doesn't like having His gift ignored, abused or neglected no more than you or I would. So please unwrap Jesus and discover just what a difference He can make to the whole of your life for then you will really know why you're giving thanks this Christmas and next Christmas and, indeed, every day in between.

May God truly bless you this Christmas and in 2008.

*Peter*

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