

(Continued from page 3)

as metal, leather, wood and paper, yet an incredible quantity of these things is wasted every year, being made into the gifts.

But during these fifty days the oldest, poorest, and most miserable of the citizens put on false beards and red robes and walk about the market-place; being disguised (in my opinion) as Cronos. And the sellers of gifts no less than the purchaser's become pale and weary, because of the crowds and the fog, so that any man who came into a Niatirbian city at this season would think some great public calamity had fallen on Niatirb. This fifty days of preparation is called in their barbarian speech the Exmas Rush.

But when the day of the festival comes, then most of the citizens, being exhausted with the Rush, lie in bed till noon. But in the evening they eat five times as much supper as on other days and, crowning themselves with crowns of paper, they become intoxicated. And on the day after Exmas they are very grave, being internally disordered by the supper and the drinking and reckoning how much they have spent on gifts and on the wine. For wine is so dear among the Niatirbians that a man must swallow the worth of a talent before he is well intoxicated.

Such, then, are their customs about the Exmas. But the few among the Niatirbians have also a festival, separate and to themselves, called Crissmas, which is on the same day as Exmas. And those who keep Crissmas, doing the opposite to the majority of the Niatirbians, rise early on that day with shining faces and go before sunrise to certain temples where they partake of a sacred feast. And in most of the temples they set out images of a fair woman with a newborn Child on her knees and certain animals and shepherds adoring the Child. (The reason of these images is given in a certain sacred story which I know but do not repeat.)

But I myself conversed with a priest in one of these temples and asked him why they kept Crissmas on the same day as Exmas; for it appeared to me inconvenient. But the priest replied, "It is not lawful, O stranger, for us to change the date of Chrissmas, but would that Zeus would put it into the minds of the Niatirbians to keep Exmas at some other time or not to keep it at all. For Exmas and the Rush distract the minds even of the few from sacred things. And we indeed are glad that men should make merry at Crissmas; but in Exmas there is no merriment left." And when I asked him why they endured the Rush, he replied, "It is, O Stranger, a racket"; using (as I suppose) the words of some oracle and speaking unintelligibly to me (for a racket is an instrument which the barbarians use in a game called tennis).

But what Hecataeus says, that Exmas and Crissmas are the same, is not credible. For first, the pictures which are stamped on the Exmas-cards have nothing to do with the sacred story which the priests tell about Crissmas. And secondly, the most part of the Niatirbians, not believing the religion of the few, nevertheless send the gifts and cards and participate in the Rush and drink, wearing paper caps. But it is not likely that men, even being barbarians, should suffer so many and great things in honour of a god they do not believe in. And now, enough about Niatirb.

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The Grapevine

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, ASHDON

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Epiphany

7th January 2018

Collect

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

First Reading: *Isaiah 60.1-6*

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Gospel: *Matthew 2.1-12*

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Post Communion

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord.

PLEASE PRAY FOR:

Churches Together Prayer Cycle: In January please pray for Saffron Walden Community Church & County High School & XL Mentoring

Those who are unwell: Dennis Sheldrick & Jenny Gallant

The family and friends of those who have died recently:

June Graves, Mary Andrews, Eric Porter & Edna Butcher

TEAM

THURSDAY PRAISE – an evening of worship, teaching and getting to know each other better in St Mary's Parish Rooms on **Thursday 18th January**. Refreshments will be on offer from 7.45pm and we'll start at 8pm. All welcome. *David*

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2018

The **Agape Meal** will be held on **Thursday 18th January** at 6.30pm for 7pm in the United Reformed Church Hall in Abbey Lane. Please sign the notice at the back of St Mary's church if you would like to come by Sunday 14th January. All welcome.

The **UNITED SERVICE** will be at the Baptist Church on

Sunday 21st January at 10.30am. There will be a **LUNCH-TIME PRAYER EVENT** on **Thursday 25th January** at 12 noon at the Baptist Church. *Kathryn Fiddock*

Starting in the New Year: **THE PARENTING CHILDREN COURSE**. Free five week course for mums and dads of children 0-10 years on Friday mornings at 9.30-11.30, from **26th January**. For more information and to book your place, please contact Rachel, 500047.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY will be observed on **Friday 26th January**. This will be a service aimed specifically, but not exclusively, at the schools at 13.40 in St Mary's. The speaker will be the Revd Dr Jos Strengholt, who for many years was a missionary in Egypt. He will focus on the persecution suffered by the peoples of the Nuba Mountains in the Sudan. On **Thursday 25th January** at 19.30 Dr Strengholt will speak and answer questions in St Mary's. His talk will be entitled: 'Persecution in Sudan today'. *Jeremy Collingwood*

COLCHESTER AREA CONFERENCE on 'Sounding Sweet – Becoming Communities of Grace' is on **Saturday 3rd February 9.30 - 3pm** at Colchester High School. £5 each or 5 places for £20. Further information and booking forms from St Mary's parish office. So we can co-ordinate the booking and the travel, let me know if you are interested in coming. *David*

COME WITH US TO ISRAEL AND SEE THE BIBLE COME TO LIFE Rufus Barnes will be leading his sixth tour of Israel from the **4th to the 14th of October 2018**. Previous tours have been enjoyed by both clergy and members of congregations from Saffron Walden and the surrounding parishes, as well as elsewhere in the country. If you would like to join this exciting tour of many of the places referred to in the Bible, please contact Rufus for more information and a brochure. (523776 or loavesandfishes@ymail.com) Rufus has been approached by a lady in Saffron Walden who would be interested in sharing a room with another lady to avoid the single supplement. If this would be of interest to anyone, please get in touch.

CLERGY TEAM

Rector: Revd Canon David Tomlinson 01799 500947

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Revd Canon Jenny Tomlinson 01799 500757

Revd. Angela Want 01799 540051

Revd Rachel Prior 01799 500047

Revd John Saxon 01799 541619

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ASHDON

'321 Love divine, all loves excelling
467 Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the
Lord

172 God is working his purpose out
382 O Lord, your tenderness

134 For all the saints who from their labours
rest

While waiting for repairs to the plumbing in the Parish Rooms, breakfast is cancelled for today. The PCC meeting planned for 8pm on Wednesday will go ahead.

XMAS AND CHRISTMAS - A Lost Chapter from Herodotus by CS LEWIS

And beyond this there lies in the ocean, turned towards the west and north, the island of Niatirb which Hecataeus indeed declares to be the same size and shape as Sicily, but it is larger, though in calling it triangular a man would not miss the mark. It is densely inhabited by men who wear clothes not very different from the other barbarians who occupy the north western parts of Europe though they do not agree with them in language. These islanders, surpassing all the men of whom we know in patience and endurance, use the following customs.

In the middle of winter when fogs and rains most abound they have a great festival which they call Exmas and for fifty days they prepare for it in the fashion I shall describe. First of all, every citizen is obliged to send to each of his friends and relations a square piece of hard paper stamped with a picture, which in their speech is called an Exmas-card. But the pictures represent birds sitting on branches, or trees with a dark green prickly leaf, or else men in such garments as the Niatirbians believe that their ancestors wore two hundred years ago riding in coaches such as their ancestors used, or houses with snow on their roofs. And the Niatirbians are unwilling to say what these pictures have to do with the festival; guarding (as I suppose) some sacred mystery. And because all men must send these cards the marketplace is filled with the crowd of those buying them, so that there is great labour and weariness.

But having bought as many as they suppose to be sufficient, they return to their houses and find there the like cards which others have sent to them. And when they find cards from any to whom they also have sent cards, they throw them away and give thanks to the gods that this labour at least is over for another year. But when they find cards from-any to whom they have not sent, then they beat their breasts and wail and utter curses against the sender; and, having sufficiently lamented their misfortune, they put on their boots again and go out into the fog and rain and buy a card for him also. And let this account suffice about Exmas-cards.

They also send gifts to one another, suffering the same things about the gifts as about the cards, or even worse. For every citizen has to guess the value of the gift which every friend will send to him so that he may send one of equal value, whether he can afford it or not. And they buy as gifts for one another such things as no man ever bought for himself. For the sellers, understanding the custom, put forth all kinds of trumpery, and whatever, being useless and ridiculous, they have been unable to sell throughout the year they now sell as an Exmas gift. And though the Niatirbians profess themselves to lack sufficient necessary things, such

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