

editorial...

'Tis the season to be full of Christmas cheer! At the risk of jumping on the bandwagon let me offer a hearty Christmas welcome to both new readers and old! I pray that the festive season will be a joyful time with friends and family for you. Amidst the secular materialism of a western Christmas may we also rejoice at the unassuming birth of our Saviour - born in a peasant home in Palestine over two millennia ago.

Many churches have coined December as mission month. This is recognition that Christmas is a time when our secular friends are more receptive to the message of Jesus Christ. If, however, this prospect brings a creeping sensation of guilt or fear then Matt Lillicrap's article 'Sticking in and Standing out' (page 15) provides help and advice tackling the motivation behind effective evangelism. Alternatively, if you require some practical advice then Mark Pickering's article (page 23) on hosting a dialogue dinner for non-Christian colleagues and friends will be useful. Additionally, the synopsis of the mission events run at St George's University CU (page 30) may be of help. These articles remind us to commit all our evangelistic efforts to God in prayer and to have faith that the love of Jesus really can melt the hardest heart. This truth will encourage us to be bold; we will never know a person's response to the person of Christ unless we first ask, for 'how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?'

Sadly, for some, Christmas is a time of loneliness and heartache, as they cannot be with their loved ones. The Bible exhorts us not to oppress 'the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor'. Instead we are to welcome them into our homes and Christian communities. Elizabeth Redman's article (page 33) concerning our response to asylum seekers will help broaden our horizons when we think about who to reach out to this holiday season.

Continuing on the theme of broadening our horizons, Colleen McGregor and Ben Saunders offer a review on their recent summer trip (page 26). Their words remind us that we are his witnesses in 'Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'. This time of year is frequently when plans for next summer are formulated and considered. Let us prayerfully consider whether God is prompting us to use our gifts and talents for him this summer on a short term mission trip or elective.

We would be delighted to hear your comments and responses to these articles and will endeavour to publish some of your letters in the next edition.

Merry Christmas!

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