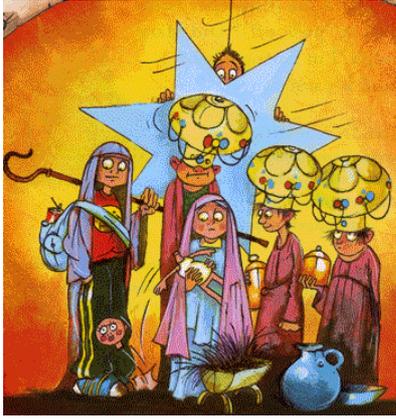


Gervase Phinn, the wonderful Yorkshire English

inspector tells the story of a nativity play he was invited to one year in a small rural school. As he sat in the front row the head teacher told him that the children had created their own play. The families of all the children were

seated and ready, very excited...



Mary and Joseph made their way towards the inn and the little boy playing Joseph took centre stage without a trace of nerves beckoned Mary to hurry up. She arrived on stage looking worried as she pulled behind her a large cardboard-polystyrene donkey. **'Come on, hurry up'** urged Joseph as he banged on the door. With no answer he banged again. Joseph began and shouted **'Innkeeper, innkeeper, let us come in'**. Opening the door just enough to see his face the Innkeeper replied **'There's no room'**. Joseph undeterred said, **'We've been up hill and down dale and we're fit to drop'**. **'Can't help that'**, replied the Innkeeper, **'there's no room'**.

'Look, I've got a wife out here on a donkey', Joseph gestured to Mary standing motionless and staring at the audience. **'Well she'd better get a move on and you can't leave that donkey there, you'll have to move it'**. **'Then give us a room, she having a baby'**. **'Well I can't help that it's nowt to do with me'**. And Joseph beginning to despair replied: **'I know, it's nowt to do with me neither'**.

The play continued through to the end and the final magic moment with the little rosy faced angels with white cardboard wings, shepherds with tea-towels over their heads and Kings dressed in old curtains and had paper crowns on their heads all gathered around Mary and Joseph to sing way in a Manger and in doing that brought a tear to every eye.



* Published by Penguin 2005 - © G Phinn & C Mould, with thanks



The book, **'A Wayne in a Manger'** * has many other wonderful and very funny stories, including the play that has to be cancelled because, (and I quote), **"T'Virgin Mary's got nits!"**

But there is one, with the script made up as they go along, that goes like this:

Joseph hearing the news of the imminent arrival of the baby, asks anxiously: **'Are you sure about this?'** Mary replies: **'Course I'm sure, an angel of the lord told me and her name was Gabrielle'**. **'I think I'm going to faint,'** Joseph sighed. **'I'm dead worried about this, it's come as a big shock.'** **'There's nothing to worry about, silly. Gabrielle told me not be frightened.'** Joseph pauses and says; **'I suppose we'll have to get married then'** **'I guess so'** replied Mary. **'Are you sure you're having a baby, Mary?'** Joseph persisted. **'Yes, I've told you and we're gonna call him Jesus and He will be the best baby in the whole wide world and we will love Him very much and we will take care of Him.'** Joseph still not looking too happy about it all said **'All right, then'**.



There are times when, as the children demonstrate in their adaptations of such a well-known story, things don't go according to plan but somehow 'it will be ok'. In many circumstances new life brings hope. This year, like no other, there have been inspirational stories of hope. But we also know there are worries ahead, and there is fear: about the economy, how we will cope, who we will lose, what will happen, and even with a vaccine, will it work. Will it ever be 'normal' again?

December and January – Advent and Epiphany are seasons of preparation and hope – excitement and trust. And Christians do believe that **"He is the best baby in the whole wide world and we will love Him very much and we will take care of Him"**.

What more is there to say but to hope that every person in our benefice will have a Happy Christmas: that along with family, friends and neighbours, near or far, whether we are alone or together, in this festival season we will find and offer good cheer, we will know generosity of spirit and be able to show kindness.



Dodie