

STILL NO ROOM AT THE INN!



Timothy Schmalz's sculpture 'Jesus the Homeless'

Timothy Schmalz's sculpture 'Jesus the Homeless' has provoked a reaction very similar to that experienced by Mary and Joseph that first Christmas. Loved by some, hated by others: where should the sculpture go?

Nothing seems to have changed in 2000 years since the birth of Christ. The homeless are still outcasts, 'despised, rejected', moved on from bench to bench in the hope that they'll just go away. Yes, there are lots of excellent projects and organisations - including churches - that work with those who can access them. But this does not necessarily reflect a general change in attitude on the part of society at large.

The Sunday currently designated as Homeless Sunday comes in January. But so soon after Christmas, in the dead of winter, people's money and energy are often both spent. The time may have come to reconsider this.

So, instead of moving 'Jesus the Homeless' around, how about moving Homeless Sunday? From *after*

Christmas to *before*. A theologically and liturgically appropriate day would be Christ The King Sunday (last in the church year and next before Advent). In Matthew 25, Jesus exhorts His followers to prepare for His return as King by providing for the homeless and destitute. And this is the way in which people were urged to prepare for His first coming as well (Luke 3:11). So our preparations for Christmas, as advocated by CASCAid, should prioritise provision for them. Suggestions for a service 'Gifts for a King' may be found at http://www.casc-aid.org.uk/media/downloads/casc-aid_service_with_sheet_music_layout_1_0.pdf

The Magi were not giving gifts to each other: they were giving their best to God incarnate. A God who was Himself homeless.

So where should that sculpture go? Beside the stockings, on all our hearths, perhaps?

Better Together

ALTERNativity
Just God, Simply Christmas



Christmas: a stress-free, joyful, Christ-centred celebration?

That's the way it should be but for many it is not.

For many of us, the reality looks very different. It's hard not to get strung out on stress and overspending. A thoughtful celebration turns into a quick nativity play and a long time in the kitchen.

ALTERNativity works with churches and communities...to motivate individuals and groups to resist the pressure to over-spend; respond to Mary's concern for the poor; re-ignite enthusiasm for great celebrations; rediscover the Christmas story...

You might be forgiven for thinking this was the introduction to CASCAid. In fact, it's from the website of an organisation with very similar aims (www.alternativity.org.uk). So it made sense for CASCAid (based in Sheffield) to start working more closely with ALTERNativity, based in Glasgow, in order to promote our common objectives. ALTERNativity produces published materials for Advent and Christmas, so have a look at their website! Results of our joint working may be found during Advent on the Church of Scotland website (www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/starters_for_sunday)



Taking a Second Look at Christmas

The Omega course is produced in partnership with another organisation, the Sanctuary (www.thesanctuarycentre.org) in Ilkley. It is now available as a single-session Advent study for groups and churches - although we still advocate the two-session version, to encourage people to take more time for reflection at the start of the festive season. It is available as a free PDF at www.casc-aid.org.uk/downloads.

Updated statistics included in the course show an estimated increase of 10% in Christmas spending since 2012, despite adverse economic conditions and the resulting increase in personal debt. So please help promote CASCAid and its partner organisations among your own churches, families, and contacts.

Advent Study Day at Shepherds Dene (Friday, 12th December 2014)

For the third year running, CASCAid's founder/co-ordinator Ruth Grayson will be leading an Advent Study Day at the Shepherds Dene retreat centre at Riding Mill, Northumberland. Further details are available from julie@shepherdsdene.co.uk. Advanced booking essential!



CASCAid would love to hear from you
Get in touch with us at www.casc-aid.org.uk/feedback



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