

## **Advent Calendar December 2020**

***Gillian Harman***

As a contribution to displays in All Saints churchyard for Advent 2020, I suggested a giant Advent Calendar. The idea was attractive but raised several serious practical questions. It needed to be weatherproof and have 'doors' that could be opened. It needed to be big enough to see easily 24 different ideas of the Christmas Story. And also where to put it so that it could be seen and appreciated!

Nerine helped me with some useful ideas but I still had to make a number of decisions during the two weeks that I spent making and assembling it. The main ones were:

1. The doors were A5 (a folded A4). I used sugar paper and cartridge paper. A problem was that the colour in sugar paper ran in wet weather during the time they were up. I cut the numbers 1 to 24 out of cartridge paper and stuck them on the 'doors'. I used white numbers on coloured paper but painted them red where the A5 was white.
2. I found a few ideas for daily topics from a small Advent calendar I had in my collection. Then I tried to think through the Christmas story in sequence, with the aim of using old Christmas cards. I sorted all my old Christmas cards into religious and non-religious ones, and then found as many themes as possible from the pictures. Gradually I prepared each A5. The lettering was done on lined paper and cut out. I trimmed the cards with a small trimmer.
3. I decided on sticky backed plastic to cover each 'door' with. I fixed a sheet over both sides of the A4 card and then folded it in half. Choosing the size of lettering was another decision (see pictures for how it looked).
4. I decided that the best basis for the calendar itself would be to use an old sheet, on which the 'doors' would be fastened, and to sew ties all round it for securing it to an upright surface. This worked well. I machined the sheet at the bottom. The eventual size was 67" wide by 49" wide.
5. I designed a heading board on cardboard for the top, with the title 'Advent Calendar'. This I also covered in film and stapled on. I laid out the 24 doors in four rows of six. I was going to sew these on but then found two boxes of paper fasteners. I used four for each door, making holes to fit them. These much easier to use than stapling or sewing.

We spent some time choosing a site for it. Eventually we chose the pair of gates which opens out on to Gascoyne Way. The short wide path down to it was covered in thick mud and moss, but Reg spent some hours scraping and cleaning it off. We also cut back small branches growing over the gates. We also had two straw bales, thanks to Renee, one each side, which effectively led up to the gate.

We put the Advent Calendar up on Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> November, fastening it on to the railings of the gate by the ties. Other churchyard displays were also put up that day. Each day throughout Advent I visited it each day to monitor it and cut off the 'door' for that day.

The site was windy, especially because of the fast traffic on Gascoyne Way alongside. There were also some periods of rain. We had to refasten a few of the ties during the period. Nonetheless the Calendar remained in good shape and condition throughout.

-----



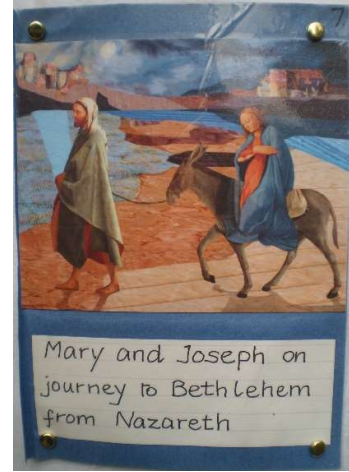
Advent Calendar fastened to the gate [30 November 2020]

Location. Cleared path, straw bales, decorations on adjacent trees [30 November 2020]





'Opening' the first door [1 December 2020]



One scene – picture & lettering



'Opening' the final door [24 December 2020]

