

# Time In

with Melin



## Festive pups

**How did our Christmas pets help out St David's Hospice?**  
Plus you could win a St David's 2021 Calendar –see p16



# It's a festive Time In!



**Paula Kennedy**

Welcome to our winter edition of Time In. After what has been a very difficult year, we hope that the recipes, art and craft ideas and lyrics to well-known festive songs bring a smile to your face. We would love to see if you have a go so please send any photographs or videos to [news@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@melinhomes.co.uk).

We have some great articles on how you can keep in touch with us, with our communities – read about our ‘It’s Good to Talk’ project on page 10, get employment advice for the new year, and how we can help you with getting online.

This year we carried out one of our largest consultations with residents which was on rent affordability, you can find the results on page 12. Of the 3,419 residents taking part in the survey 1,234 completed the questionnaire, giving us a response rate of 36% which is fantastic, thank you.

We hope you get to enjoy some family time (in person if you can, on the phone or virtually) this Christmas and look forward to welcoming a more normal 2021 (hopefully!)

Happy New Year, Paula



# Staff pull together for Torfaen Santa Appeal



We have supported Torfaen Santa Appeal for six years. This year things looked a little different as we couldn't drop the presents off in one drop like we normally do, staff supported by buying 78 gifts and dropping to collection points themselves.

These are some of the gifts that were donated, A huge thank you to our staff who supported, your generosity is amazing.



Load up the sleigh! Just some of the collection for the Santa Appeal

# Staying in but staying in touch



**Dudley and Marguerite told us about how they've used their device**

Lockdown and restrictions have been tough for many of us, but for those who live alone it has been even harder. We applied to Digital Communities Wales to get some digital tablets so that we could help some of our older residents stay safe at home, but also stay in touch with the people they love and miss. Four of our sheltered schemes are going to pilot the project with a couple of residents from each one agreeing to look after the devices and learn more about getting online to see how it can help them.

Dudley from Monmouth told us how his digital device has been a lifeline to the outside world at times.

“We have used our portable very regularly, we found it particularly useful during Covid-19 lockdowns by being able to keep in contact with family through video and using it for various hobbies as an alternative to watching the repeats on the television.”

Dudley and wife Marguerite have used their digital device to download free magazine subscriptions, knitting patterns, hold family quizzes and even learn Welsh!

If you would like help getting online, please contact [news@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@melinhomes.co.uk).

# New year – new job

Our Employment Team are here to help you find a job, get the right training, upskill in your current role or even set up your own business. They can help with:

- Training
- Job searches
- Interview techniques
- Volunteering
- CV writing
- Confidence building
- Work placements

Let 2021 be the year your career takes off! For more you can either email [employment@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:employment@melinhomes.co.uk), call **01495 745910**, or send us a message on our social media.

# Foodbanks at Christmas



If you or someone you know is struggling to afford food this Christmas, then foodbanks are there to help.

The Trussell trust has a network of food banks across south Wales providing emergency food and support to people who might need a little help this Christmas.

To find out where your nearest foodbank is, and what time it opens, contact the Trussell Trust on **01722 580 180** or visit the website at [www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org).

If you need any help regarding this, the Melin Money Advice team are here to help and can provide food vouchers to use at foodbanks. To speak to the team, email [enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk), call **01495 745910**, or send us a message on Facebook.



# Resident group budget for fellow residents in crisis



## 100 Voices support fellow residents

Volunteers from our residents' feedback group 100 Voices have created a £6,000 budget to help fellow residents out of hardship in these uncertain and difficult times.

Members of our 100 Voices group, who give us feedback on our policies and procedures and represent resident views, are awarded an annual budget but this year they have been touched by the stories of some of their fellow residents who are suffering because of the pandemic. As unemployment rates rise, staff in our Money Advice team are sadly hearing from more residents who have lost work, are waiting for new benefits claims to be processed, or are struggling to afford, even the basics like milk, tea, and baby food.

At a recent meeting members of the 100 Voices decided that they would give £1,000 a month (until March) towards Tesco vouchers, which will be given to residents in crisis as identified by Melin staff.

Chair of the 100 Voices Natalie Gardner said: "We were keen to do anything we could to help those who are suffering, and we appreciate the hard work that staff are putting in to support those residents. In what is a very trying time for many, we hope that we can make a difference to those in greatest need."

# Live Fear Free

If you or someone you know is suffering domestic abuse, or sexual violence then call Live Fear Free the 24-hour helpline on **0808 8010 800** or text **07860 077333**.

**Maybe you think it's not your business?**

**Maybe you think someone else is already helping?**

**Maybe you doubt yourself or maybe you are scared?**

But if you feel that someone is suffering a simple 'Are you ok?' may be enough to show someone the support they need to get help.

Don't hesitate to make the call **#MakeTheCallWales**

The 24-hour Live Fear Free helpline is available if you or someone you know is a victim of violence against women, domestic abuse or sexual violence.

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# Money worries



If Christmas is looking bleak as you are struggling financially, maybe you have just lost your job or reduced hours are making it impossible to pay your weekly bills, please get in touch.

## Energy emergency?

If you can't pay for your heating or electric, please get in touch with us as soon as possible.

Don't leave things too long, talk to us.

Email [moneyadvice@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:moneyadvice@melinhomes.co.uk) or call **01495 745910**.

We are here to help.

# Socially distanced Santa



It may be 2020 but Santa still wants to get on the Melin sleigh bus and spread some cheer. So, he may be coming to a street near you before the big day. You won't be able to get up close and personal, but he is sure to leave some goodies for you to enjoy.

When Santa visited young residents Jaida, (7) and Darcie, (4) – they were thrilled to meet (socially-distanced) Santa and their parents agreed it was a 'lovely gesture' and 'nice to see someone giving people something to smile about.'

The number of visits will be limited this year, but he wants you to know that if you miss out this year, he will put you on his list for next year. Ho-Ho-Hope you see him.

To make up for the lack of in person visits he offered to send video messages to your home. We had a great response and we look forward to hearing from the people who received a special Santa message.







**(Opposite page, top)** How's this for festive social distancing? Our Santa delivered presents with his special Christmas present picker to visit as many young residents as he can.

**(Opposite page, lower)** Here's Santa and his helper at Lavender Gardens.

**(Left)** Santa on one of his socially distanced visits with his trusted elf Pasha Paws.

## It's good to talk!

We know that the situation this year has left many of us feeling uncertain, out-of-sorts and even lonely. Staff at Melin wanted to do a bit more than the day job and extend the hand of friendship (albeit down a telephone line) to let people know how much we value them and that they're not forgotten.

The lovely folk in our Communities Team who would usually be out and about with their quizzes, music, laughter and fun, are missing their conversations with you. So if you, or someone you know is missing family, friends, scheme managers, neighbours, or just the usual chit chat and passing smiles that would usually be a daily occurrence, please let us know and the team will happily schedule a regular phone call with you – as the advert said “It's good to talk.”

Email [news@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:news@melinhomes.co.uk) or give us a ring on **01495 745910** to sign up.

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## How to contact us

There will always be someone at the end of the telephone but there are lots of other ways to get in touch with us from 8 till 6 Mondays to Thursdays and 8 till 5 on Fridays:

- Email: [enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@melinhomes.co.uk)
- Web chat: chat to us using the box in the corner of our website.
- Type your message in the contact form on the right hand side of every page of our website (except the home page).
- Find us at [www.facebook.com/melinhomes](https://www.facebook.com/melinhomes)
- Join us on Twitter [@melinhomes](https://twitter.com/melinhomes)
- Text: **07860 027935**
- Tel: **01495 745910**  
(For emergencies outside of our normal hours select option 2.)

**New! We are now also on WhatsApp, all you have to do is add the number 07830 365910 to your contacts and you can send us a message using WhatsApp!**





# On-call staff over the Christmas period



Our electrical team is just one of the teams ready over Christmas for any emergencies. (This photo was taken last year before Covid-19)

We will be closed **from 5pm on 23rd December and will re-open on 4th January 2021**. We have a team of on-call staff available during this time just in case you have an emergency.

An emergency repair is a problem likely to cause danger to health or serious damage to your home:

Flooding, electrical failure or full central heating break down in severe weather (October to March).

We hope you don't need the teams over the festive period but if you have an emergency please call **01495 325333**. Thank you to all our staff who will be on-call over Christmas.



# Rent affordability

This year we carried out one of our largest consultations with residents which was on rent affordability. We did this by email, post and by calling residents. We also held a Facebook Live session, offered Zoom meetings, plus a webinar, and uploaded a presentation with voiceover so that residents had as much information as possible on the consultation.

Of the 3,419 residents taking part in the survey 1,234 completed the questionnaire, giving us a response rate of 36% which is massive, for which we thank you.

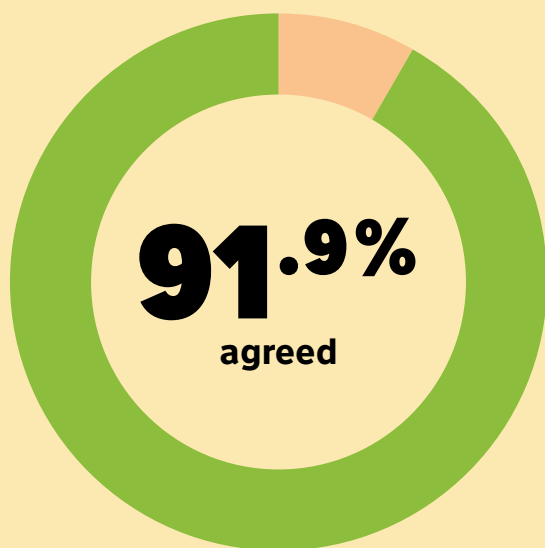
**1,234**  
responses

## Our two main questions were:

**When thinking of how we set rents we aim to make sure Melin has enough income to:**

- continue to deliver high quality services to residents;
- invest in maintaining and repairing our existing homes;
- continue to build hundreds of new affordable homes each year.

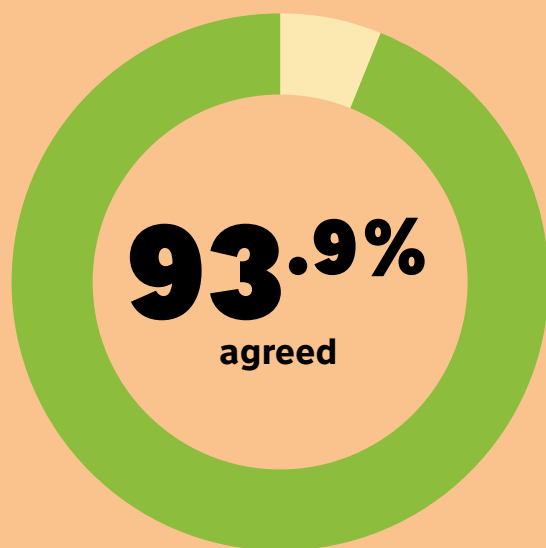
**Do you agree with this?**

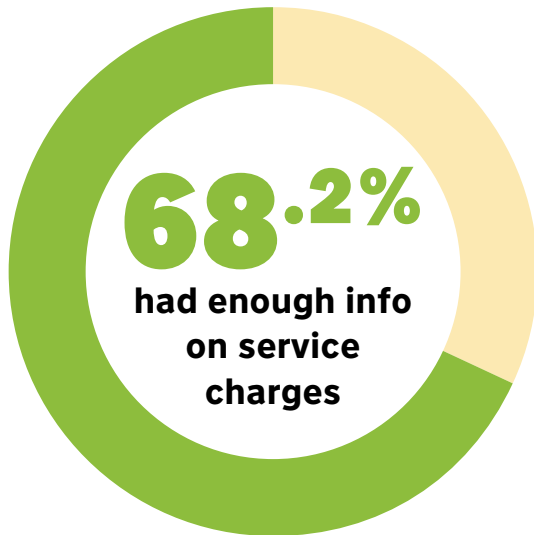


**We are considering setting rents by using a method developed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (who work to solve UK poverty).**

**If a household is on the National Living Wage of £8.72 per hour their rent should not be more than 28% of their net weekly income.**

**Do you agree with this?**





68.2% of residents told us that they had enough information on their service charges...

We will work with residents to improve these figures.



...and 58% felt that they were good value for money.



We received 607 individual comments which were checked and 159 actions were carried out, including repairs booked and advice given.



672 residents also agreed to take part in our later profiling survey of which 201 said that they would be happy to work with us on further surveys in the future.



Again, many thanks for your help and we will be in touch with residents in due course outlining how the result of the consultation will affect the way we calculate our rents in the future.

# Holiday arts and craft ideas

## Christmas Painted Rocks

- Rocks
- Some paint
- Felt tip pens
- A paintbrush or cotton to paint the rock
- Acrylic sealer – if you are planning on hiding them outdoors



Painting rocks can make great results

Always make sure to wash and dry your rocks. For these Christmas rocks, we started with a base coat of white. This way the lights pop a bit more on the rock. Once the rocks are dry, use a felt tip to create a string for the lights. They can go any direction you like! Then add some colourful lights with either paint or felt tip pens.

You can do any design you like – don't forget to share your designs with us. All of our contact details are on page 10.

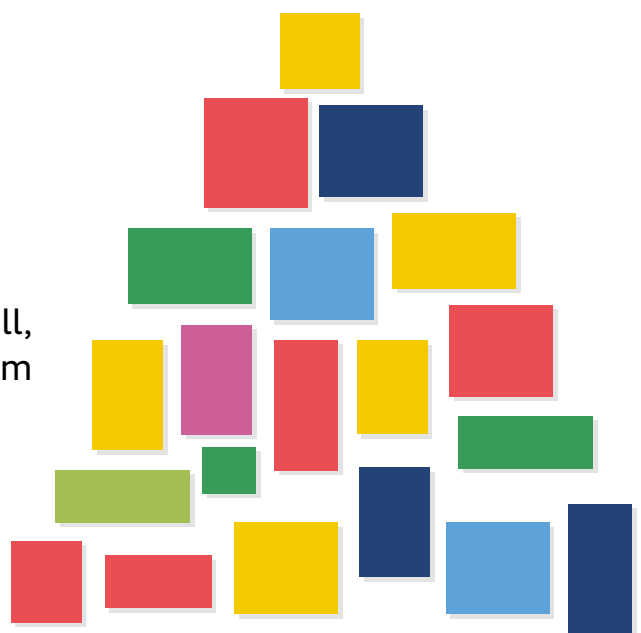
Your rocks can decorate your home or you can gift them to others.

## Holiday Card Tree

Go for a mix of vintage and current holiday cards to make a creative Christmas wall tree. It can also serve as the perfect photo opportunity for your family.

Just simply put all your cards on a wall, you can use Blu Tack and arrange them in the shape of a tree. Easy peasy.

For more ideas you can search online 'festive arts and crafts'. We are sure you have your own ideas, so please share them with us.





## Try a simple recipe

### Spiced Christmas Biscuits

Grab your pinny, the kids and let's get your festive bake on. These spiced Christmas biscuits are easy-peasy crowd pleasers, and they double as Christmas decorations!

#### Ingredients

- 225g light muscovado sugar
- 175g golden syrup
- 2 teaspoons of ground ginger
- Half a teaspoon of all spice
- 2 eggs
- 1 tspn baking powder
- 650g plain flour, plus extra for dusting
- 200g chilled butter
- 100g royal icing sugar

#### Method

- 1 Mix the sugar, syrup, spices, and egg in a jug. Tip the baking powder and flour into a bowl and add the butter, stir it through the flour and rub it until it looks like breadcrumbs. Add the contents of the jug and a pinch of salt and stir the mixture to combine it. Use your hands to bring the dough together and then knead it till its smooth. Divide the dough into four and press each into a disc. Put in plastic bags and chill for at least an hour.
- 2 Heat the oven to 180c. Roll the dough out in batches on a lightly floured surface to the thickness of a pound coin and cut into your favourite Christmas shapes. Christmas trees, bells, holly leaves can all be done with a knife, so no fancy cutters are needed. Make a little hole at the top of the shapes so that you can thread a ribbon through if you want to use them as edible decorations. Lift them with a pallet knife onto a baking sheet lined with baking paper
- 3 Bake in batches for 10 to 15 mins. Leave for five minutes before moving off the tray to cool fully on a wire rack.
- 4 If you want to decorate them with icing, follow the instructions on the packet till the icing is the consistency of toothpaste then decorate. Leave to cool and harden then enjoy, Yum!

# St David's Hospice – our charity of the year.



When Time In went to print in mid-December, we had raised an amazing £10,346.86 for the charity. We have also provided sponsorship of a number of their events including their 2021 calendar. Our month is December 2021, and we asked staff to send in festive photographs of their pets to feature. We think they look so cute!

We have two calendars to give away to two lucky residents. Simply send in your name and address and we will randomly select the winners. Our contact details are on page 10.

You can purchase the calendar (subject to availability) in their shops or online at [www.stdavidshospicecare.org/online-shop](http://www.stdavidshospicecare.org/online-shop).

If you have photographs of your pets dressed up, please share them with us. Contact details are on page 10.

Some of our staff shared photographs with us of their festive homes, what do you think? Have you gone all out this year with decorations to brighten up the winter? We would love to see your photographs, send them in. We have a £25 voucher for the best dressed house.



# Community art project



**Marion did a great job with everybody's artwork**

Do you remember the community art project we ran during the first national lockdown? We wanted to lift people's spirits and asked for them to send in photographs and drawings of anything that made them happy – we called it Together We Can.

We asked local artist Marion to bring all the pictures to life in a virtual art exhibition. You can see the video on the Melin YouTube channel and looking for our video titled “Together We Can Community art project”

Huge thanks to everyone who sent in artwork, Marion for bringing it to life and Barnabas Arts House for letting us use their space to set up the project.





# If you smell gas

If you smell gas in your home or business, it's best to get in touch straight away with Wales & West Utilities. You can call them free on **0800 111 999**. They have a plan of six easy steps. Here's what to do:

## **Step 1: Call Wales & West immediately.**

On freephone **0800 111 999**. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and will send out an engineer to keep you and your property safe.

## **Step 2: Turn off all your gas appliances**

And, if possible, switch off the gas at the meter (unless the meter is in the cellar or basement, in which case don't go in).

## **Step 3: Open windows and doors**

Open all your windows and doors.

## **Step 4: Do not use any electrical appliances**

This includes switching your lights on or off.

## **Step 5: Do not smoke**

Do not smoke or use naked flames.

## **Step 6: If there's a smell of gas in the cellar or basement**

Please wait outside or with a neighbour.

For more information go online and search 'Wales & West Utilities smell gas'.



# Reader poems

In the last edition of Time In we asked people to send in their poems reminding us to be Gas Safe. Phil and Jan Pashley from Brecon sent us their brilliant poem – here it is...

It doesn't take skill  
To realise Carbon Monoxide can kill  
It's odourless, no smell  
Colourless, not seen  
Not any old poisonous gas  
It's the meanest of the mean

They were selected as the winners of the competition and as they live close to The Priory Church of Wales School, they will be sharing their prize and both will receive Amazon vouchers. Well done!

## Thanks for the thank you!



One of our residents kindly sent staff a thank you card and chocolates for all the help and support we have given them. It put a smile on a lot of faces, thank you for thinking of us.



# Sing loud and proud

We might not be able to meet up but that doesn't stop you arranging some carol singing from your doorsteps!

We've included the words to some of our favourite carols. Why not send your favourites in? If you do organise some doorstep singing why not record it and send the video in? Our contact details are on page 10.

## The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
A partridge in a pear tree.

1

On the second day of  
Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

2

On the third day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

3

On the fourth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

4

On the fifth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

5

On the sixth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

6

On the seventh day of  
Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

7



8

On the eighth day of  
Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

On the ninth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

9

On the tenth day of Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

10

On the eleventh day of  
Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree.

11

On the twelfth day of  
Christmas,  
my true love sent to me  
Twelve drummers drumming,  
Eleven pipers piping,  
Ten lords a-leaping,  
Nine ladies dancing,  
Eight maids a-milking,  
Seven swans a-swimming,  
Six geese a-laying,  
Five golden rings,  
Four calling birds,  
Three French hens,  
Two turtle doves,  
And a partridge in a pear tree!

12

# Sing loud and proud (continued)

## Deck the Halls

Deck the halls with  
boughs of holly,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Tis the season to be jolly,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Don we now our gay apparel,  
Fa la la, la la la, la la la.  
Troll the ancient  
Yule tide carol,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
See the blazing Yule before us,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Strike the harp  
and join the chorus.  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Follow me in merry measure,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
While I tell of  
Yule tide treasure,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Fast away the old year passes,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Hail the new,  
ye lads and lasses,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Sing we joyous, all together,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.  
Heedless of the wind  
and weather,  
Fa la la la la, la la la la.

## Away in a manger

Away in a manger,  
No crib for His bed  
The little Lord Jesus  
Laid down His sweet head  
The stars in the bright sky  
Looked down where He lay  
The little Lord Jesus  
Asleep on the hay  
The cattle are lowing  
The poor Baby wakes  
But little Lord Jesus  
No crying He makes  
I love Thee, Lord Jesus  
Look down from the sky  
And stay by my side,  
'Til morning is nigh.  
Be near me, Lord Jesus,  
I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever  
And love me I pray  
Bless all the dear children  
In Thy tender care  
And take us to heaven  
To live with Thee there



## O Little Town of Bethlehem

O little town of Bethlehem  
 How still we see thee lie  
 Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
 The silent stars go by  
 Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
 The everlasting Light  
 The hopes and fears of all the years  
 Are met in thee tonight

For Christ is born of Mary  
 And gathered all above  
 While mortals sleep, the angels keep  
 Their watch of wondering love  
 O morning stars together  
 Proclaim the holy birth  
 And praises sing to God the King  
 And Peace to men on earth

How silently, how silently  
 The wondrous gift is given!  
 So God imparts to human hearts  
 The blessings of His heaven.  
 No ear may hear His coming,  
 But in this world of sin,  
 Where meek souls will receive him still,  
 The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem  
 Descend to us, we pray  
 Cast out our sin and enter in  
 Be born to us today  
 We hear the Christmas angels  
 The great glad tidings tell  
 O come to us, abide with us  
 Our Lord Emmanuel

