



BARRY AND VANESSA'S 2025 QUIRKY CHRISTMAS LETTER

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Vanessa: Already! Time for another Quirky Christmas Letter. Well, to begin with, we are so thankful for the power of friendship, especially as we age. Welcome once again to our longtime friends. You mean a lot to us. Thank you so much as year after year you read your Quirky letter hoping that this time it might actually be worth the effort. And for our new friends, it is a special delight to welcome you to the Quirky Qclub.

Barry: This letter, as usual, is complimentary. Which means we would like to *compliment you* on being one of the many people who have crossed our paths and enriched our lives by your grace and goodwill.



A Christmas Story

Barry: When our children were young, we used to have a family discussion every year about how we would celebrate Christmas. One year, for example, we decided to buy a simple dinner from a chook shop and send the money saved to overseas missionary friends.

At one point, we lived opposite the Julia Farr Centre, then known by the bleak name of the Home for Incurables. Vanessa used to do some visitation there and quickly discovered that some of the patients had no one to visit them for Christmas. So that year, we decided to invite five of them to have dinner with us.

Apart from the fact that our thirteen years old son Michael and I managed to tip one poor man half out of his chair, as we tried to negotiate our way through our front door, initially it all went well. We festooned the dining room with decorations, and Vanessa cooked a great meal. Fifteen years old Becky was our delightful waitress, attired in a beautiful long, flowing dress. In reality, she spent most of the meal spoon-feeding one lass who was unable to take even small amounts of food smoothly into her mouth. Even so, she made sure she sampled everything. It was a messy, lengthy task and Becky actually had little to eat herself.

Then towards the end of the meal, as she was carrying some plates, Becky tripped on her new Christmas gown and everything fell to the floor. She had just had new teeth braces fitted and hurt her mouth as well. She was heart-broken and burst into tears. As it happens, no serious damage was done, and nowadays, she says she can't even remember the incident. But Vanessa and I have never forgotten it. Becky's selfless service conveyed the meaning of Christmas better than anything else that happened that day.

Note: Keep reading so you don't miss the Christmas Prayer on the last page.

A Quirky Quiz

How well do you know the Christmas story? Here is your chance to find out. Just mark each of the following statements as follows:

Y for yes, if you agree. **N** for no, if you disagree. **M** for maybe, if you are uncertain. You will find the answers in the Scripture references given below. (*Hint: Most of the statements are in the N or M categories.*)

1. Zechariah was struck blind when he was told his wife would bear a son.
2. The angel who appeared to Mary was a beautiful woman named Gabrielle.
3. The name Immanuel means Saviour.
4. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem because she was of the lineage of David.
5. Mary rode a donkey to Bethlehem.
6. Initially, only one angel in white appeared to the shepherds.
7. All of the angelic host sang praises to God.
8. The angels said, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace...'
9. When the glory of the Lord surrounded the shepherds, they were filled with joy.
10. There were three wise men (sometimes called Magi, from an old Persian term).
11. The wise men arrived riding camels.
12. The wise men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and a purple robe.
13. An angel of the Lord appeared three times in dreams to Joseph.
14. Herod ordered the death of all the children in Judea.
15. The angels were obvious by their wings.

Answers: 1N, Lk 1:20; 2N, Lk 1:26. (Also, female angels are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible); 3N, Mt 1:23; 4Y, Lk 2:4, 5N, and few ordinary people could afford to own a donkey; 6Y, Lk 2:9; 7Y Lk 2:13-14; 8Y, Lk 2:14; 9N, Lk 2:9; 10 M, the number is not stated, but assumed because there were only three gifts; 11 M, Mt 2:1-9, camels are not mentioned but may be assumed; 12 N, Mt 2:11; 13 Y, Mt 1:20: 2:13; 2:19; 14 N, Mt 2:16, 15N, Lk 8:15, there is no mention in the Bible of angels having wings.

Congratulations! So what you do now is foist this quiz on all the unsuspecting guests at your Christmas dinner. Should be fun.

The perfect number?

Vanessa: This year, great-grandchild number ten arrived. But ten is not the perfect number. G-GC Number eleven is due next year, and there are almost certainly more to come. Score so far: Two of us, three children plus three spouses, twelve grandchildren incl. eight spouses, ten great-grandchildren, in all: **38**. Yeh!

SMS News Update

Barry: A cruse to rembr. Vnssa & I hopd 2 enjy wndfl cruse 2 NZ 1st Oct bt we bth got vry sck & spnt mre tme in shps hspth thn on dck.

Vanessa: What on earth are you doing?

Barry: Just what the YP do these days, when they send messages.

V: It just looks like your qomputer has lost half its keys. Or you have lost half your mind.

B: Yeah, but—

V: If you're going to put my name on this report, at least write it properly.

B: I'm only trying to be relevant.

V: About time. But there's got to be a better way.

B: Mm, OK, OK. I suppose you're right. I'll try again.

A Cruise to remember.

Venissa and I hoped to enjoy a wonderful cruise around New Zealand last October with old friends, but we both got very sick and spent more time in the ship's hospital than we did on deck. Venissa nearly died from a virus (really!) and I lost ten kgms and took months to recover. Thank God we are OK now. We did have some nice Bible studies on board with other believers and we sang some hymns and prayed together.

We also enjoyed a wonderful Sunday service at the Wellington CRC church. The people received the Word with gladness; the children ran and danced around the hall while we all sang; we were welcomed with generosity and love; prophetic ministry was effective. There was a tangible, joyful sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus was truly honoured.

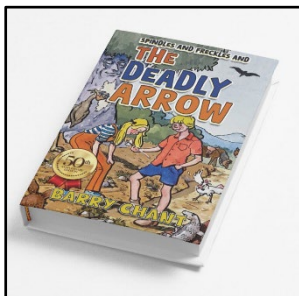
B: Is that better?

V: You've made some spelling mistakes.

B: Sigh...

An exciting new book for children (and adults, too!)

Barry: Five decades ago, we published the first *Spindles* stories. Since then, there have been seven books, two musicals, several audio recordings, translations into a number of languages and *Spindles* merch of various kinds. And now, to celebrate, a fiftieth anniversary edition has been released. It's called *The Deadly Arrow*. Hundreds of copies have already been sold. It's a great Christmas gift for tweens and teens. Printed book or e-book format. ***If you want a couple of short stories that bring out the love and mercy of the cross in a way that will touch the hearts of children, this is the book.*** Go to https://www.barrychant.com/product/the_deadly_arrow/. (Press control + click.)



More Funerals

Vanessa: There used to be a time when we found ourselves being frequently invited to birthdays and weddings. Then it was anniversaries. Now we are in our eighties, it's funerals. Still, being asked to speak at some of these has been good for Barry. He is reflecting more and thinking more on the nature of heaven, and on our own funerals as well. This has been really encouraging and inspiring. You might like to check the short message he gave at our dear friend Bev Russell's funeral.

Many people found it uplifting and encouraging. Here is the link: [What Heaven is Really Like: The Truth About Heavenly Hope - Barry Chant](#)

Spot the Differences

Barry: We collaborated with AI in preparing this little challenge. There are eleven differences between the two drawings. If you find them all, congratulations! You should be a detective (or a journalist).



Answers: Check the tassel on Dad's hat, Dad's buttons, the contents of the glass, the boy's hat, the picture hanging, the petals on the girl's decoration, the size of the star, the icing on the pudding, Mum's wedding ring, the bow on the table decoration, the pleats on the tablecloth.

Vanessa: Here's another couple of ideas for Christmas dinner discussion. (1) How many Christmas symbols are omitted from the pictures altogether? (2) Which items in the picture might suggest Christmas ideas that aren't spelled out e.g. the lifted hands might suggest, not just pleasant surprise but also worshipping. These two suggestions could be fun at your Yuletide yunch.

Conferences

Vanessa: Barry was one of the speakers at the CRC International conference in Adelaide this year on the topic Selfless Service. He spoke about the self-emptying of Christ, finishing with Charles Wesley's great hymn, *And Can it Be?* which includes the beautiful line, 'Emptied himself of all but love.' We also participated in the Tabor Spirit Life conference in October, a non-denominational event celebrated by enthusiastic believers from many churches, and the *Gathered*

conference which brought together the various Hills Baptist congregations in a united, enthusiastic celebration.

The Red Centre

Barry: We enjoyed a relaxing vacation in Alice Springs in August with our daughter Becky and her husband Steve. It was exciting to see the wonderful work they are doing in the schools where they are employed, and in the CRC church.

A 2025 Christmas Prayer

Finally, an old prayer in a new format for your 2025 Christmas dinner:

*Our Father, throned in heaven,
may your name be ever holy
and revered by those who understand its worth;
may your kingdom come in fulness
and your will be followed solely,
as in heaven so on this uncaring earth.*

*And with every day that passes
may our needs be well provided;
may you pardon us for heeding sin's allure;
as we demonstrate forgiveness
when we're hated and derided,
and affirm that love and meekness both endure.*

*Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil,
for yours only is the kingdom we adore,
with celestial power supernal
and with majesty eternal,
now today, tomorrow and forever more.
(Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4, paraphrased by BC).*

May you enjoy an inspiring Christmas and a flourishing new year.

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From our springtime garden

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