

LINK

Monthly Magazine

DECEMBER
2013

50p



St Mary the Virgin, Rickmansworth

The Church of England and the Methodist Church in partnership

Supporting the whole community



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REGULAR SERVICES

PLEASE SEE CALENDAR ON CENTRE PAGES FOR FURTHER DETAILS, AND OCCASIONAL VARIATIONS AND ADDITIONS

	TIME	SERVICE	FORM
SUNDAYS			
Weekly	8.00AM	Holy Communion	Anglican BCP
1st	10.00AM	Family Communion followed by coffee in the Church Centre	United Rite
2nd-5th	10.00AM	Sung Holy Communion followed by coffee in the Church Centre Children's Church in the Church Centre Crèche in the Tower	
2nd	12.15PM	Holy Communion	United Rite
Weekly	6.00PM	Evening Service	
WEEKDAYS			
Mon-Fri	8.30AM	Morning Prayer	
Tue	9.30AM	Holy Communion	United Rite
Mon-Fri	5.45PM	Evening Prayer	

CONTACTS

The code for all telephone numbers is 01923, unless otherwise indicated.

CHURCH WEBSITE	www.stmarysrickmansworth.org.uk		
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PARISH OFFICE			
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Opening Hours		9.30AM-1.30PM, Mon, Thu, Fri, and 1.00-3.00pm Wed, in school term time	

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Pastoral Letter

The Church Year Starts Now

Dear Friends,

I don't like to be predictable but...

As each new Liturgical Year begins - and indeed as each new Liturgical Season throughout the year begins - I find myself saying (usually to myself), 'Ah, I love this season'. And so, as we approach Advent, I find myself saying it again. (I don't like to be predictable but...)

Very few people like change, and I guess I don't like it all that much, but the changes caused by the changing of the Liturgical Seasons are some that I have grown to value with increasing depth and intensity as the years pass by. Given to us by our forebears in faith, the Liturgical Seasons give us a chance to heed not only Feast Days themselves, such as Christmas Day, Epiphany or Easter Day, but also the themes relating to these days as the seasons continue on after the Festival Day. Thus Christmastide lasts for twelve days, not just the one day of Christmas, Epiphanytide lasts for forty days, and Eastertide lasts for fifty!

If you are into New Year resolutions (as I referred to in the Leader last month) why not make one to really enter into the Christian Year in all its depth and fullness this year, seeking to discover more about each season as it arrives (or even in advance if you are super-organised and efficient!) Knowing more about things really does change how we experience them. Knowing more about our faith changes how we are in relationship with God. We have increased understanding which allows deeper questioning, challenging, seeking after more penetrating

answers. Knowing more also allows us to have more confidence when faced with the wondering and pondering of others. We don't need to have all the answers - but having *some* really does make a difference.

I don't like to be predictable but... I close with a Happy New (Liturgical) Year greeting to you all!



Readings at Communion

1 Dec	Isa 2.1-5*	Rom 13.11-14*	Matt 24.36-44
8 Dec	Isa 11.1-10	Rom 15.4-13	Matt 3.1-12
15 Dec	Isa 35.1-10	James 5.7-10	Matt 11.2-11
22 Dec	Isa 7.10-16	Rom 1.1-7	Matt 1.18-25
24 Dec	Isa 62.6-12	Titus 3.4-7	Luke 2.1-20
25 Dec	Isa 52.7-11	Heb 1.1-4	John 1.1-14
29 Dec	Isa 63.7-9	Heb 2.10-18	Matt 2.13-23

*8.00am service only

Prayers

Weekly Pointers for the Month

Week beginning:

- 1 Dec Social Workers and Probation Officers
- 8 Dec Those engaged in the creative arts
- 15 Dec One-parent families
- 22 Dec That we may fitly welcome the Christ-child
- 29 Dec Those supporting the homeless

For Local Churches

The Deanery

- 1 Dec St Lawrence, Bovington
- 8 Dec St Mary's, Rickmansworth
- 15 Dec All Saints', Croxley Green
- 22 Dec Christ Church, Chorleywood
- 29 Dec Mill End, West Hyde
and Heronsgate

The Methodist Circuit

- St Mary's, Rickmansworth
- Studham
- Trinity, Watford
- Wheathampstead
- Abbots Langley

People Living in Rickmansworth

- 1 Dec Woodcock Hill, Shrubs Road
- 8 Dec Anson Walk, Astons Road
- 15 Dec Askew Road, Sandy Lodge Road
- 22 Dec Wolsey Mansions, Park Mansions, Main Avenue
- 29 Dec Pembroke Road

St Mary's Network

- 2 Dec John and Sheila Nunn, Barbara Owen
- 3 Dec Margaret Owen, Tony and Janet Page
- 4 Dec David & Barbara Paterson, Hillary Pearce, Heather Pearce
- 5 Dec Ken Pettit, Tracey Phillipps
- 6 Dec Freda Pickard, Mary Pilborough

- 9 Dec Maxine Platzman, Gary and Kate Pope
- 10 Dec John and June Poppleton, Gareth and Suzanne Powell
- 11 Dec Tracey Presswell, Eric Price
- 12 Dec Jim and Jane Pummell, Alec Quin
- 13 Dec Anne Ratcliffe, Kevin and Tanya Redfern

- 16 Dec Sue Reynolds, John and Anne Rhodes
- 17 Dec Brian and Helen Richards, Steven and Gwyneth Roberts
- 18 Dec Averil Rossiter, Christine Russ
- 19 Dec Alton Saunders, Geoff and Pam Saunders
- 20 Dec Robert and Sarah Saunders, Bill Sharp

Prayer for December

*Sent to one of our parishioners a few years ago by her cousin,
a retired Jesuit priest in India.*

Into our hands
Mary has given her child,
Heir to the world's tears,
Heir to the world's toil,
Heir to the world's scars,
Heir to the chill dawn
Over the ruins of wars.
She has laid love in his cradle
Answering for us all:
"Be it done unto me."

Advent

*Deborah gave us a full account of all that is on offer during
Advent in the November issue of LINK, still available on the
Church website in the archive section if you have discarded your
copy. Here is a summary.*

Advent Sunday

Please remember to bring your Crib at either the 8.00am or
10.00am services if you would like it to be blessed.

Come to the popular Advent Carol Service at 6.00pm on the same
day.

During Advent

Posada, the Travelling Crib, will be passed from one home to
another throughout Advent. Do sign the list at the back of Church
early so that it comes to yours.

Sunday Sermons during this season will follow the traditional themes: death, judgement, heaven and hell.

For Personal Inspiration you could follow the St Alban's Advent Course, livethechallenge.co.uk or www.followthestar.org, recommended by the Vicar, or borrow one of the Advent books available in our Church Library.

Christmas at St Mary's

Batchworth Lock Christmas Carol-singing

Saturday 14 December, 4.30pm

Christmas is certainly on its way when we gather for the Carol Service organised by the Boaters' Christian Fellowship at Batchworth Lock. Telling the story of Christmas, and singing favourite Christmas Carols to the accompaniment of a Brass Band - this is a lovely event to get us into the 'Christmas Spirit'. Wrap up warm and bring along a torch!

Christingle Service

Sunday 15 December, 4.00pm

Come and join us as we sing Carols as well as make and light our Christingles in this lovely Service, especially with children in mind. Following the Service we enjoy cakes and drinks in the Church Centre. If you can call to let us know you're coming that would be helpful - but if you don't get a chance, come along anyway.



As you will know, this Service raises money for a really good cause, The Children's Society. If you would like a special Christingle candle to collect money in, drop into or call the Parish Office and Louise can let you have one.

The Christmas Tree of Prayer

Continuing the tradition of decorating our Christmas Tree of Prayer with the names of those family, friends or situations we are thinking of now, the ‘decorations’ on this special tree are the stars that shine as lights of hope. The tree will be in Church from 22 December until Twelfth Night. The Church is open during daylight hours for you to come and add names, and you are welcome to invite others to do so too. Feel free to spread the word about this lovely tree of prayer and hope.



Carol Singing

We’re engaging in another spot of Community Carol Singing around the town this year - all in aid of Crisis at Christmas. Feel free to come and join us on Monday 23: 10.30am-11.15am at Waitrose, and 11.30am-12.15pm at Marks and Spencer. If you can’t sing, come and shake a tin for us!



Decorating the Church

The Church will be decorated for Christmas on Saturday 21 December from 10.00am. Please bring foliage with berries to the Church that morning or leave it in the tower during the preceding days.

Christmas Greetings

There are two options for sharing Christmas Greetings at St Mary’s this year:

- (1) Used increasingly by members of our congregation, there is a board at the back of church where people can put up a card to everyone in the parish. Money that would have been spent on cards is then given to the charities named below via the same system.

(2) Lettered boxes will be at the back of Church for people to post their cards to other members of the congregation. There is a 'charge' of 10p per card which will be divided equally between the Children's Society and National Children's Homes (Action for Children). Please drop payment into the Parish Office. The boxes will be available from Sunday 15 December until after the Service on Sunday 5 January. Any cards not collected by this date will be given over to a recycling facility. There are many cards left behind each year, which is a real shame: if you see some cards you could deliver, please do so.

Carol Service: Sunday 22 December, 6.00pm

Our Carol Service will be followed by mince pies and mulled wine in the Church Centre. The members of X Team will be making the pies this year, but if you would like to donate a few, feel free: please bring them along in the morning.

Crib Service – 4.00pm Christmas Eve

This is a service principally for families - although all are welcome to attend. If you are bringing along younger family members, please encourage them to dress up as either a shepherd, a lamb or an angel. We usually have far too many Josephs... yes, really!

Open House at The Vicarage

Do feel free to drop in to The Vicarage between 2.00pm and 7.00pm on Saturday 28 December where I shall have mince pies, mulled wine and mulled fruit juice ready to welcome you all. Do come along and say hello!

Services through the Christmas Season

Our services until Sunday 5 January continue the Christmas theme, and we offer these services in addition to our usual Sunday morning services.

Blue Christmas
Sunday 29 December, 6.00pm

This service is for those for whom Christmas is a difficult time - for whatever reason. Come and join us in a quieter, more reflective time together. All are welcome.

Carols, Music and Readings at the Crib
Sunday 5 January, 6.00pm

We sing the last carols of the Christmas Season and hear readings and music to bring to a close this time of celebration. We also look forward to the coming of the Wise Men and the Season of Epiphany that begins the following day.

United Church Council
Report of November Meeting

At the recent meeting of the United Church Council, amongst other items, the following items were recorded and discussed.

Remembrance Sunday: Deborah offered thanks to those who had assisted 'behind the scenes' in preparation for the Service: moving chairs, handing out service booklets and tidying up afterwards. Appreciation was offered for the Service, and delight expressed at the number of people of all ages in attendance - reaching towards 400. Deborah assured the meeting she was not ignorant of those who wish the Silence to be marked in the morning and suggested we might need to give thought to how we mark Armistice Day itself.

Budget: The Budget for 2013 was reviewed, and the Budget for 2014 was agreed. Concern was expressed that there will be a deficit at the end of 2013 due to a number of unexpected items needing payment, as well as a disappointing response to this year's Stewardship Campaign.

Following a recent inspection, **Death-watch Beetle** has been found in the upper chamber of the tower. Work was approved to deal with the infestation - at a cost of £3,500 + VAT.

Evening Prayer: Deborah is concerned as to the safety of those attending Evening Prayer during the week during the Winter months. The church is locked at 4.00pm each day and unlocked again at 5.30pm for the Service at 5.45pm. Following recent incidents, the safety of the faithful few who attend is considered to be at serious risk - and all were encouraged to consider ways of increasing the attendance at these Services as consideration is being given to ceasing them during the Winter months which will be a matter of great disappointment to those who attend.

St Mary's Pin Badges - On Sale Now!

These have been produced as an outcome of our Mission Action Plan discussions. They have been designed to be worn as a sign that we are part of St Mary's.

Wearing these at local events, and around town, will help to raise our visibility in the community.

They cost £1.00 each and are available at coffee after church, and from the Parish Office.

They would make perfect stocking fillers!

Unfortunately we have not been able to reproduce a picture of the badge here but the design is as shown with the M in gold on a blue background, with a gold rim.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Michael Baker

From a sermon preached at Choral Evensong, 20 October 2013

Our Reading Group 'God Matters' has recently been studying the *Letters and Papers from Prison* of Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Bonhoeffer, born in 1906, was a German Protestant pastor, one of those who refused to bow the knee to Adolf Hitler and the Nazis in the years leading up to the Second World War. He became a marked man in the eyes of the Gestapo, and his activities were increasingly restricted. Banned from preaching or

teaching, he worked for a time as pastor for two German Lutheran congregations in London, but felt he was evading his responsibilities and returned to Germany where he organised an underground anti-Nazi theological training school, moving from place to place in the German countryside.

His brother-in-law, a member of an anti-Nazi group who worked in German military intelligence, the Abwehr, warned him that war was coming and that he was liable to be called up for military service. Bonhoeffer, a convinced pacifist, decided after much agonising to take up a post he had been offered at an American theological college. However, he immediately regretted this and decided it was his duty to return to try to preserve the true Christian faith in a nation that had become viciously pagan, and sailed home on the last ship before war was declared. His brother-in-law arranged for him to join the Abwehr, which, odd as it may seem, served as a cover for much anti-Nazi activity, on the spurious grounds that his church contacts would be useful for obtaining intelligence. This would excuse him from conscription into active military service, and also enabled him to help to smuggle Jews out of Germany by passing them off as intelligence agents, as well as to provide them with funds. Himmler's SS and security empire was constantly trying to discredit the Abwehr and in 1943 Bonhoeffer was arrested on suspicion of evading military service, misuse of funds and subversion. He was confined for 18 months in a military prison awaiting a trial which was indefinitely postponed, keeping him out of the hands of the Gestapo.

Sympathetic guards smuggled letters for him to his family and friends, and it is a collection of these that we have been studying. In some of the last of them he speculates on the nature of Christianity in, as he puts it, a post-war world 'without religion'. He drew a distinction between what he called 'religion' and 'faith'. It was impossible, he said, to preach repentance to

someone who has no conception of sin, and fruitless to try. All we can do is come to God as we are and offer ourselves to his service. He never renounced that faith; he continued to pray and to study the Bible. God, for him, was very real. In one of his last letters to his friend and fellow-pastor Eberhard Bethge, who compiled the collection of letters we now have, he writes: 'It is only by living completely in the world that one learns to have faith. One must completely abandon any attempt to make something of oneself, whether it be a saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman, a righteous man, or an unrighteous man, a sick man or a healthy one. I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures, experiences and perplexities. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings but those of God in the world - watching with Christ in Gethsemane. That, I think, is faith.'

Such was indeed his fate. Once proof of his connection through his brother-in-law with the bomb plot against Hitler's life was discovered, Bonhoeffer was consigned to the Gestapo interrogation centre in Berlin, then to Buchenwald and finally to Flossenburg concentration camp, where so-called 'prominent' prisoners were held. In the very last month of the war in Europe, the SS found proof that the head of the Abwehr, Admiral Canaris, had been shielding anti-Nazi conspirators within the intelligence service. Hitler immediately ordered that they should all be destroyed. Bonhoeffer was led away as he was conducting a service in the camp. Knowing what was coming, he remarked to an English fellow-inmate: 'This is the end - for me, the beginning of life.'

After a rushed, summary court-martial, where no evidence was produced and he was not allowed to speak in his own defence, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was sentenced to death. He was hanged at dawn on 9 April, 1945. Stripped naked prior to execution, he

knelt and prayed before stepping up to the scaffold. His statue is among those of other twentieth century martyrs on the West front of Westminster Abbey.

Pause for Thought

The Box

Submitted by Nick Tibbles

The story goes that some time ago a mother punished her five-year-old daughter for wasting a roll of expensive gold wrapping paper. Money was tight and she became even more upset that the child used the gold paper to decorate a box to put under the Christmas tree. Nevertheless the little girl brought the gift box to her mother the next morning and said, "This is for you".

The mother was embarrassed by her earlier over-reaction, but her anger flared again when she opened the box and found it was empty. She spoke to her daughter in a harsh manner, "Don't you know, young lady, when you give someone a present, there is supposed to be something inside the package?"

She had tears in her eyes and said, "Oh, it's not empty! I blew kisses in it until it was full." The mother was crushed. She fell on her knees and put her arms round her little girl, and she begged her forgiveness for her thoughtless anger.

An accident took the life of the child only a short time later, and it is told that the mother kept the gold box by her bed for all the years of her life. Whenever she was discouraged or faced difficult problems she would open the box and take out an imaginary kiss and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us, as human beings, has been given a golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses from our children, families and friends. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold.



CALENDAR

December 2013



1 SUN	ADVENT SUNDAY <i>Year A of the Lectionary begins</i>	
	8.00am	Holy Communion Anglican BCP
	10.00am	Family Communion United Rite
		Home Communions
	6.00pm	Advent Carol Service
2 Mon	12.30pm	J Club at St Mary's School
	7.45pm	Community and Outreach Committee
3 Tue	9.30am	Holy Communion United Rite
	7.30pm	Chiltern Choir rehearsing in Church
5 Thu	10.45am	Assembly at St Mary's School
		<i>LINK</i> Copy deadline
6 Fri	7.30pm	Lemon Tuesday Concert in Church
7 Sat	1.30pm	Chiltern Choir Practice in Church
	7.30pm	Chiltern Choir Christmas Concert in Church
8 SUN	THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
	8.00am	Holy Communion Anglican BCP
	10.00am	Parish Communion United Rite
	12.15pm	Holy Communion United Rite
	1.00pm	Lunch Club
	10.00am	Parish Communion United Rite
	2.00pm	Chorleywood Choral Society Rehearsal in Church
	6.00pm	Said Evening Prayer
	7.00pm	X Team
	7.30pm	Chorleywood Choral Society Concert in Church
9 Mon	11.30am	Prayer for Healing Group in Church
	12.30pm	J Club at St Mary's School
	7.30pm	<i>LINK</i> Committee meeting
	7.45pm	Fabric and Churchyard Committee
10 Tue	9.30am	Holy Communion United Rite
	12.00 noon	Ten-bell Ringing Practice, all ringers welcome
	7.45pm	Exploring Prayer Group (at Vicarage)
11 Wed	7.45pm	Housegroup (for contact, see cover)

12 Thu	10.45am	Assembly at St Mary's School	
	12 noon	Deanery Clergy Chapter	
	7.00pm	Charlotte House Prep School Carol Service in Church	
14 Sat	4.30pm	Batchworth Lock Carol Service	
15 SUN		THE THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
	8.00am	Holy Communion	Anglican BCP
	10.00am	Parish Communion	United Rite
	4.00pm	Christingle Service	
	6.00pm	Said Evening Prayer	
16 Mon	12.30pm	J Club at St Mary's School	
	7.45pm	Stewardship and Finance Committee	
17 Tue	9.30am	Holy Communion Service	United Rite
	12 noon	Home Communion through afternoon	
	6.00pm	St Mary's School Carol Service	
18 Wed	7.45pm	<i>God Matters</i> , at Vicarage, all welcome	
20 Fri	9.00am	St Mary's School End of Term Service	
22 SUN		THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	
	8.00am	Holy Communion	Anglican BCP
	10.00am	Parish Communion	United Rite
	6.00pm	Christmas Carol Service	
		<i>followed by mulled wine and mince pies</i>	
23 Mon	10.30am	Carol Singing at Waitrose - for Crisis	
	11.30am	Carol Singing at Marks and Spencer - for Crisis	
24 Tue		Christmas Eve	
	4.00pm	Crib Service	
	11.30pm	Midnight Christmas Communion Service	
		<i>with the Blessing of the Crib</i>	
25 Wed		CHRISTMAS DAY	
	8.00am	Holy Communion Service	Anglican BCP
	10.00am	Family Communion Service	United Rite
26 Thu		STEPHEN, DEACON, FIRST MARTYR	
27 Fri		JOHN, APOSTLE AND EVANGELIST	

28 Sat THE HOLY INNOCENTS
 2.00pm Christmas *Open House* at The Vicarage

29 SUN THE FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
 8.00am Holy Communion Anglican BCP
 10.00am Parish Communion United Rite
January LINK is published
 6.00pm Carols and Readings at the Crib

31 Tue 9.30am Holy Communion United Rite

January 2014

1 Wed THE NAMING AND CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS
 10.00am Holy Communion for United Rite
 New Year's Day

5 SUN THE SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
 8.00am Holy Communion Anglican BCP
 10.00am Family Communion United Rite
 Home Communions
 6.00pm Carols and Readings for Epiphany

6 Mon THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY
 7.45pm Sung Communion United Rite

Regular Weekly Practices

Wed	7.30pm	Bellringing
Thur	7.45pm	Choir

New members welcome at both practices - just come along

Watford & Three Rivers Refugee Project

Mick Hayter, Volunteer

A short note to convey our sincere thanks to everyone for donating goods to the project from your recent Harvest Festival Service. We will be distributing them to the twenty five families we are helping over the next month or so, and as they are not allowed to work or receive benefits, they will be very grateful.

We very much appreciate your interest in our work and are grateful for all the support you have given and continue to give. Once again our thanks to you all.

St Mary's in the Past

1923

The Revd F H J Newton, still concerned with increasing church income, appealed for people to join the Freewill Offering Scheme - at length - "Rich and poor, old contributors and new, we should all face our responsibilities in this matter".

He reported that the December *Gazette* was nearly 'crowded out' and he as editor was by no means sorry not to have to write the whole thing himself. [*That's what we welcome too! Eds*]

The Girls' Brigade had voted unanimously for quiet afternoons and several, led by other local vicars, had been arranged lasting from 3.00pm to 7.15pm. The vicar would arrange similar quiet meetings for the men's and women's groups.

A report on religious education in schools stated that its advantage was security for the teaching of the Christian faith to children. The people of Rickmansworth had been subscribing to provide for it for some years. There had been 56 subscribers in 1907 giving at least £64 a year, but during the [First World] War years donations were not invited and by this time there remained only 14 subscribers. Subscriptions, it was decided, would no longer be sought until such time as a new school was needed.

Weddings were reported in considerable detail in those days. For instance, in one the bride's dress was of white satin charmeuse draped with lace. One bridesmaid wore a brown dress of similar material and two others were in almond green. The couple would honeymoon in Bournemouth and even the bride's going away outfit was described. Another bride wore grey.

A Poppy Day had been held on Saturday 10 November, with one seller starting at 5.30am. The railed off space in front of the Council Offices was used as the sellers' headquarters. Between them they collected £72. The following Armistice Day's service, arranged by the various churches in the town and the local branch of the British Legion under Lord Ebury's command, was well-attended.

At a whist drive the following evening, several of the guests had names still familiar locally: Miss Eggleton, Mr W Beeson, Mrs Peddle.

There was no mention of Advent or Christmas in this issue.

1973

In the December *See Round*, one parish magazine, where the church was quoted as having difficulties with churchyard maintenance, appealed for parishioners to 'cut the grass around their own graves'.

In *Parish News* it was reported that the Bazaar had raised £531.50. A new processional cross had been presented by Tom Gander.

The Vicar described the ecumenical Summer School he had been to in Canterbury, which he had found most stimulating. Initially he had been daunted by the preponderance of American and Canadian delegates (152 and 24 respectively) and only 26 British ones out of about 230. Lectures had compelling titles like [Television]: *Monster or Marvel* and they learned a new hymn, *The Kingdom is a Knees-up!* Most western denominations were represented, except Roman Catholics; eastern Orthodox Churches were not.

Confusingly the Vicar wished everyone a happy and blessed Christmas, but later announced that the Christmas edition of the

magazine would be published on 23 December. [Now there's an idea for next year. Ed]

The Gospel Around Us

Pushing the Envelope

Brian Evans

In what is termed by some a post-Christian world, we are confronted on every side by pride, hypocrisy, and a lack of concern about anything hinting at God. We see around us all kinds of publicly-accepted sin and idolatry, exhibited by people who have no idea that that's what it is. In the face of this, it's easy for us to become tongue-tied; to feel we cannot respond, and to believe it impossible to turn the tide and bring God back into our world.

We are in great need of rescue from the destructive effects of these fears. A number of Bible passages that have come my way recently have some bearing on this thorny problem. If pushed to provide a simple summary of their message I think I would say, "Try to see the big picture." One by one, they are these.

Isaiah's prophecies brought comfort to those enduring exile in Babylon; but his message wasn't just for the exiles, or indeed for all of the Israelites, but for the whole world. "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isa 49.6-7). Simeon recognised this promise as being fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 2.30-32).

Zechariah was amongst the first wave of Israelites to return to Jerusalem after the exile. Their aim was to rebuild the city. In one of his visions Zechariah saw a man with a plumb-line about to measure the city in order to assess the materials required to rebuild the walls. But an angel delivers a message from God for

the man, that Jerusalem would be a city without walls. God said that He would be the fire wall, as well as the glory within the city; there would be no need for walls (2.1-5). In succeeding chapters the scene becomes far broader; God speaks of bringing people in from across the world (8.6-8), and suddenly there are things far more important than merely the walls of one city.

By the time of Jesus, the Jews were once more hidebound by tradition, rules and religious habits. The Pharisees were outraged at one of His healing miracles. This woman had suffered for eighteen years, ran their logic; why was there any need for her to be healed just then, on the Sabbath? Jesus' concern overruled any man-made rules. He simply saw her need, and reacted in love (Luke 13.10-17).

And finally, I offer you Romans 12.17-19, where Paul encourages us not to be petty in our thinking. Rather than reacting in our limited strength to something that offends us, we are encouraged to be at peace, and leave it to God to take appropriate action.

When we are confronted by the world's standards, and wonder how to react, we have a clear instruction in the final verse of that chapter, "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good", and we can find encouragement in Jesus' words, "take heart - I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Keep Off the Grass!

John Shaw

The Choir were relaxing at a 'pudding party', expertly laid on for us by Colin and Annette Leveridge at their lovely home in Chorleywood. There were so many of us (and so many puddings to try) that we fell into two groups in different rooms. In our group, conversation ranged far and wide. Having first wrestled unsuccessfully with the old 'chestnut' of how to attract more

(and younger!) people to join the Choir, we turned to other topics.

As the announcement of Nina Myers' amazingly generous bequest of a quarter of a million pounds for the upkeep of the fabric of St Mary's was fresh in our minds, we fell to speculating how it might most usefully be used. I said that if the decision was left to me personally, I would take out the pews and replace them with good quality chairs. This, I argued, would make the whole place more attractive, more comfortable and give us a more flexible space for a wider range of uses. This suggestion was received with almost universal horror by the group. Such a change, they argued, would ruin the atmosphere of the place and would detract from the sense of holiness which it generates. In short, 'no way'!

Afterwards I mentioned this reaction to my wife, who by this time had left the party, as she had another commitment to meet (oh, the joys of local government). A historian by background, she reminded me that seats of any sort, let alone pews, are a relative innovation in the life of the Church, where in earlier centuries standing room only was the order of the day. So much so that if you suffered some physical weakness or disability, you headed for the wall so that you had something to lean on. Hence the saying, 'the weakest to the wall'.

I have been mulling over this experience ever since. What makes a place 'holy'? Should we only do 'holy' things in Church? Does God 'live' in our Church building more particularly than in, say, your or my garden? In any case, what does 'holy' mean? We ought to have reached some understanding of this for ourselves, as we are bidden to be 'holy', after all. It's something to do with 'wholeness', I fancy. We are (I hope) being provoked by the Holy Spirit to embrace the **whole** life of Jesus Christ so that we can relay the **whole** love of God to the **whole** world. So, perhaps we should not limit the use of our Church to what we have

traditionally viewed as ‘holy’ or ‘sacred’. When the Church Centre is otherwise booked, is there any reason why the Townswomen’s Guild or Weight Watchers should not meet in Church? Or Christian Aid hold a quiz evening there? It occurs to me that we are already part way there in that we have already welcomed Punch and Judy and face-painting in Church at our Jubilee picnics! We have even held a pantomime and drinks parties in Church before now, I recall.

It’s good to think the unthinkable from time to time. How about you?



Nature Notes

Angela Hall

Back in September, whilst walking along a path through Ashridge Park, I noticed what looked like an antler sticking up out of the undergrowth, and thought perhaps it had been cast and left like that. Then it moved and there was another simultaneous movement about two feet away. There were two antlers still attached to a fallow buck lying up amongst the bracken and brambles. Keen to see the rest of him, I walked forward cautiously in case the rutting season had made him aggressive. But he just got up and bounded away and we had a good view of him. Fallow deer are often brown with white spots but this one was very dark on his back and certainly a handsome animal. Unfortunately deer are becoming a problem as there are rather too many of them nowadays and they are causing a great deal of damage to crops and gardens, also a few serious road accidents.



Fallow Deer

Rabbits, on the other hand, are decreasing. Populations have fluctuated for some years due to myxomatosis and now there is also rabbit haemorrhagic disease. Earlier this year there were still many behind Chorleywood House and a few on the Common, but I haven't seen any on Woodoaks Farm for some time. Research has shown that foxes are in decline and in rural areas there may be a connection.

The good news is that the red squirrels' population in Northern England is at last starting to increase. This has been brought about by a concerted effort to eliminate their non-native grey cousins, who carry a disease known as squirrel pox which does not affect them but is horribly lethal to reds. Also the greys can digest unripened nuts before the reds can eat them. Enthusiasts have introduced special feeders only accessible to the smaller reds and have drastically culled the greys so that at last the reds have a chance to survive and increase.



Red Squirrel

As I write, the autumn sown wheat is forming a patina of vivid green in the nearby cornfields. As I passed recently two carrion crows were pecking at something grey in the field. I had just seen a notice about a missing cat. I do hope... In all probability it was a wood pigeon. When I walked back they had gone but a red kite was pecking at it, perhaps having chased off the crows. Recently I saw a flock of fifty or more birds in this same field, settled in a group, facing into the wind so that their feathers didn't get ruffled. I did not hear any sound from them or see them fly but I am almost certain they were golden plovers, a sure sign of winter's approach.

By the time you read this we shall be nearing the winter solstice and once again there will be shoots coming up and buds on the trees, promising nature's resurrection.

Appendix: Nature Notes

Peacocks R I P

Brenda Bell

Last month I enclosed a photo of a peacock butterfly on one of our Harvest flower arrangements. Sadly one of our flower arrangers told me afterwards that she had found three peacock butterflies, and one other unidentified, dead on the window sill when she removed the arrangement. [Many peacock butterflies die in the tower every year *Ed*]

Watersmeet

December

Fri 6-Tue 31 Times vary Pantomime: *Sleeping Beauty*
Box Office (711063)

RDFAS

Sarratt Village Hall
Tuesday 3 December, 11.00am
With tea/coffee at 10.30am

St Nicholas of Myra and Santa Claus

A case of mistaken identity

Sally Dormer

Membership Secretary and for further information,
contact: Diana Jefkins (01494 874507)

St Mary's People

Birth

BENJAMIN PUMMELL was born on 31 October, a son for Dave and Berny and a new grandson for Jane and Jim Pummell.

Deaths

MARY BOND We are sad to hear of the death of Mary Bond on Wednesday 23 October and extend our love and prayers to Geoff and their family. We hope to include an obituary in due course. Some of you may remember that Geoff and Mary celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 1 September and offered wine and cake after the 10.00am service that day.

PHYLLIS HOWSE, formerly of Pheasants Way, died on 10 October in a Care Home near Newmarket.

From the Registers

Baptism

We welcome into the Church

27 Oct **ALBERT THOMAS BUDD**, son of Jane and Neil

Funeral

We think of the family of:

4 Nov **MARY BOND**

Smile

The Lighter Side of Christmas

Confessions made to Church Times

Only Men Allowed

Our church has a “come as shepherds, angels, wise people, animals” invitation to our crib services [as does St Mary's, Ed].

An animated ten-year-old ‘wise man’ was vociferous in his views. “There were only *three* Wise Men and they were all men. You cannot have *girls*.”

The Importunate Doll

(From a vicar’s wife)

Vicarage children have to be very patient on Christmas Day, waiting for daddy to finish all his services and duties before the present opening can begin. However, we did let them choose three presents to open before church.

So it was that our three-year-old chose her new doll to sit with her in the pew. I was pleased she was playing so nicely on Christmas morning, for she had a reputation as a wanderer. For a change, I could actually concentrate on the service, and rashly, closed my eyes for the prayer of consecration.

I had, therefore, no idea that she was now undressing her doll, and finding a string to pull from the middle of its back. As her daddy lifted up the chalice, an automated voice pierced the holy stillness with a loud “I want a wee-wee”. I wanted to crawl under the pew.

LINK

Jane Pummell

Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions for LINK are due in January. Enclosed with this issue is an order form and we do encourage you to sign up for the year: it helps us know how many copies we need to print and also means there is less loose money lying around. The subscription for the year remains at £6.00 (but now £13 by post). If your magazine is delivered you do not need to fill in a form, just wait until your distributor calls.

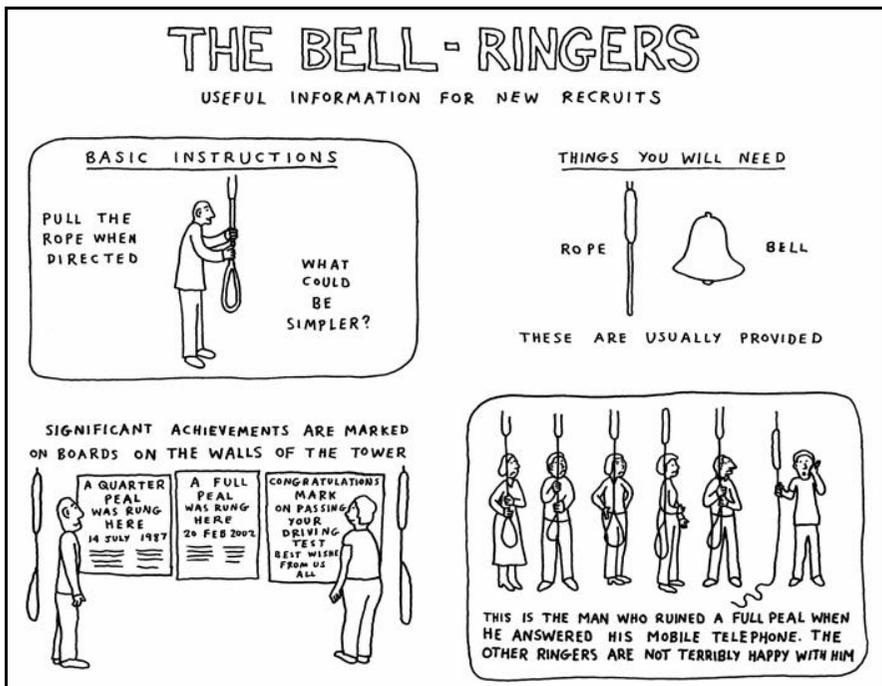
Since January an electronic version of LINK has also been available. Over 40 people are on the mailing list now. If you

would like to see all the photos in full colour, or enlarge them, then why not sign up to receive LINK by email. You can either email us at link@stmarysrickmansworth.org and we will add you to the mailing list or you can sign up direct via our website www.stmarysrickmansworth.org.uk/link.html. There is no need to fill in a form as well.

We use the free MailChimp service for e-subscriptions. This is a secure mailing service and your details will not be used for any other purpose than sending you LINK each month.

We are not making a charge for email copies, but donations to the Church to cover non-printing related production costs would be much appreciated.

Dave Walker Cartoon



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We Wish all our Readers a Holy and Happy Christmas



January 2014 LINK

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Publication Date Sunday 29 December

We are very pleased to receive contributions of interest to members of the Church and the local community. Copy should reach a member of the LINK Committee* by the above copy date, preferably by email (please leave the formatting to us) at link@stmarysrickmansworth.org.uk, but we can accept handwritten copy. We may have to edit for space or other reasons and tight deadlines do not always allow for discussion of changes with authors. We like good quality photographs with enough contrast to reproduce well in black and white. Please note that opinions expressed in LINK are not necessarily those of the Editors of *LINK* or St Mary's Church.

*Please see back cover for phone numbers.

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		June Poppleton	773388
THE UNITED CHURCH COUNCIL			
	Secretary	Louise Wotherspoon	721002
	Treasurer	Robert Kay	773470
CHURCH HALLS			
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		centrebookings@stmarysrickmansworth.org.uk	
	Treasurer	Simon Allard	776641
Cloisters Hall	Bookings	Sarah Bennett	775613
	Treasurer	David Morgan	779740
CHURCH MUSIC	Organist & Choirmaster	Andrew Sykes	718561
SACRISTAN	Team Leader	David Gilbert	332572
<hr/>			
ALTAR SERVERS		Chris and Sue Hillier	779580
BAPTISMS		Contact Parish Office	721002
BELL RINGING	Tower Captain	David Hibbert	773735
	Sun 9.15-10.00AM, 5.15-6.00PM		
	Wed 7.30PM-9.15PM		
	Handbells	Suzanne Warren	01442 385922
BIBLE READING FELLOWSHIP		Sue Hillier	779580
CARE	Representative	Angela Hall	720543
CHARITABLE GIVING COMMITTEE			
	Chair	John Shaw	775219
CHILDREN'S CHURCH	Sun 10.00AM, Church Centre		
Junior Church		Libby Kershaw	776251
Sunbeams (3-5 years)		Rachel Turvey	c/o 721002
CHURCH CLEANING		Derek Day	237248
COFFEE AFTER CHURCH		Anne Kay	773470
COMMUNITY AND OUTREACH			
	Chair	David Carruthers	897928
ELECTORAL ROLL		John Glidden	223613
FABRIC & CHURCHYARD COMMITTEE			
	Chair	Colin Leveridge	282198
	Secretary	David Hibbert	773735
FLOWER ROTA		Julie Smethurst	282927

CONTINUED ON BACK OF COVER

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	2nd Wed, 7.45PM	Jane Pummell	774343
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		Suzanne Hill	772809
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	Stewardship Recorder	Brian Warrington	775360
SUNDAY SERVICE ROTAS			
	Bible readings	Jane Pummell	774343
	Intercessions	John Glidden	223613
TODDLERS' CLUB	Church Centre,		
	Wed 10.00AM	Gillian Thomas	446931
UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS			
	Rainbows Tue	Samantha Swinchatt	c/o 721002
	Brownies Mon	Ali Hampton	07803 928158
		Yvonne Wells	07790 935192
	Guides Fri	Tracy Jenkins	c/o 721002
WEDDINGS			
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		Marian Lantree	01727 862602
YOUTH GROUP	X-Team	David Carruthers	897928

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