
the **All Saints**
Newsletter



All Saints Church Berkhamsted An Anglican Methodist Local Ecumenical Partnership

December 2017 January 2018



**We wish you a Good Advent
A Joyful Christmas
and a Peaceful New Year**





Editor's Note

It seems that Christmas is upon us once more. I have had to think about the season in the middle of October. I love carols so it wasn't too hard. So thank you to those who have risen to this challenge and written about Christmas in the late autumn and thank you too, to those who have written challenging, thought provoking or amusing unseasonal articles for the Newsletter. If you have enjoyed one of these articles it might be a nice idea to contact the author and say so. Perhaps if you disagree with something you could say that too.... nicely of course!!!

And can I say a personal thank you to all those who have supported me over the years. I do so love the pots of flowers and encouraging words that are given to me. So to all our readers a very joyful Christmas and the best hope and prayer that we can for a peaceful new year.

The copy date for the February March edition is Friday 5th January 2018.

Christina Billington

Rachael's Letter

"Christmas is all about the children - that's right isn't it?"

Every time I hear that, I actually want to say - well, no, I don't agree, although I rarely do, so this is my opportunity!

Christmas is often seen as a time for children and I understand why - the excitement that they have as the big day gradually draws closer, the delight on their faces as they see the lights and decorations, the smiles that beam as they open their presents and start to play with their new toys. And we must, of course, mention the lovely nativity plays that feature the toddlers with tea towels on their heads or dolls being carefully placed in a manger. Christmas can be a really magical time for children.

The trouble is that concentrating on children at Christmas means that we can forget that this celebration is for each one of us of, whatever age we are. I have a reading at home which speaks of all the older people who are involved in the Christmas story - from Elizabeth and Zechariah to Anna and Simeon in the temple. The shepherds weren't children; neither were the magi. Yes, a baby was the focus of the story, but a baby was not where it ended and by focusing so much on the children, I think we can miss out on some of the older people who played important parts in the narrative.

Their part in the story reminds us that God can use us at any age. But their part in the story also reminds us that God values all of us, whatever age we are.

The heart of the story of Christmas is about love, relationship and hope, things that are important to each one of us. Jesus came because God in his love for us, wanted to reach out to us, to have a relationship with us. He saw that we were getting things wrong, struggling with how to live; so he wanted to help, to guide us, to encourage us, to help us to see that as dark as life can

feel sometimes, there is always hope and light shining into the darkness. One thing that I love at Christmas is seeing the church lit up by candles, those tiny flames that can make such a difference in the darkness. In a similar way, God's light can come into the darkness of our lives and give us hope. And that hope, that love, that relationship that he offers is there for each one of us, no matter what age we are.

So this Christmas, as you celebrate with your families, remember that Christmas is for the children, but it is also for you, because God values and loves you and came so that you might know light and life and hope. What a fantastic gift!

I hope that you all have a really wonderful Christmas and look forward to the new year in expectation.

*Blessings,
Rachael, Andrew, Thomas and Samuel*

Family News

We are pleased that Revd Rachael

has now recovered from a long bout of labyrinthitis.

We have been delighted to welcome to our services Gail and Jonathan Butler with their baby Ethan and Amelia and Steve Dowty with baby Freddie. We hope they will all be very happy with us at All Saints. We also welcome Liz Terrett to All Saints as our new administrator, working mostly with Rachael to ease her work load. We hope she will enjoy working at All Saints and will soon feel that she belongs among us. (See page 24 of the newsletter). We send our love and deep sympathy to all the Judd family on the death of a dear

mother and grandmother, Jeanne Woodley. We all have very fond memories of Jeanne. Duncan Pain and his family had a difficult time when problems arose after an operation to remove Duncan's tonsils. All is now well and Duncan is back at school again after a month away; we wish him well as he does his best to catch up on work he has missed.

Brian Parsons is now very frail and spent some time in hospital recently but is now in rehab in Hemel Hempstead.

Gordon Hufford is now happily settled at a Care Home in St Albans, near his son, Jonathan.

Hayley Elliott, granddaughter of Mary Griffin, is still having tests; we remember her in our prayers as the medical profession seek to find out just what is the matter with her.

The Wignall family have had a very difficult time recently with both John's father and Heather's mother very ill at the same time, one on the Wirral and the other in Coventry. Both are still causing concern and we send Heather and John and all their families our love and our prayers at this anxious time.

Brian Saunders has had a spell in hospital but thankfully he is now at home again. We send our love to both Brian and Margaret at this time.

We congratulate Ruth Treves Brown on celebrating a significant birthday.

Chris Lumb is recovering well from a recent operation and thanks you all for your cards and prayers.

We continue to hold in our prayers John Hopps, Rosemary Armstrong, Chris Billington, Jonathan, Ann and Katy Hayes, Viv Dottridge, Heather Gifford, Richard Hope, Kathleen Whitfield, Pauline Purdy, Revd David Bridge, the elderly who can find getting to church difficult and those in our Church Family in need and known to God.

Ruth Treves Brown

Advent Acrostic Poem

A time of waiting
Dim mornings, dark evenings
Veils of mist
Envelop our gardens.
November leads to December and the
Truth is before us, so frail, in a manger.

Christina Billington

About our People not Borders exhibition: 'I am me'

It was in April, I think, that Lisa said at our weekly People not Borders committee meeting, “Let’s do a picture book.” I wrote the words that afternoon, and the next day Paula Watkins, a Catholic from Hemel and a wonderful mixed media artist and teacher, had agreed to illustrate with textile pieces. That same day she had been driving and listening to a phone-in chat show in which some callers’ attitudes to refugees had left her in tears – and wondering, prayerfully, what she could do to help. Of my six publishers I knew there was only one I could ask, and when their editor said, ‘Yes’, I cried and hugged her. TSL in Rickmansworth work quickly too, and their ethos is one of supporting minorities and celebrating diversity. I had already checked with the Housing team at Dacorum Borough Council that my simple, rhyming account of a refugee child’s experience of coming to the UK felt accurate to them; the response was, “We all love it.” It was always intended not just to raise money but to develop empathy through understanding.

While Paula wondered how, with a busy diary, she would ever produce all those

artworks (seventeen in the end) by July, I began a long, complicated and taxing business of setting up an exhibition built around it: planning the contents, finding venues that wouldn’t charge us and generally spending a lot of time on email. Organisation is not my forte! Many of my emails were ignored but all it takes for things to move is a few individuals who care, and I found some. My friend, singer-songwriter Minnie Birch from Hemel, had written a haunting song about her experience of volunteering in the ‘Jungle’ in Calais, called Sangatte. I found the UNICEF film shared by a young refugee and Harry, who was a refugee in World War Two. Katy Brookes-Duncan, who is no longer in Berkhamsted but still a Trustee, sent me a kind of souvenir she’d bought in Greece: a bag made from lifejackets abandoned on Lesvos and designed by refugees in the camp where she volunteered for a couple of months early this year. I spent four joyous hours with two lovely Syrian girls who have settled in Hemel, helping them to paint their self-portraits with the guidance of my artist friend Sheelagh Frew Crane. We had kept back some of the plates painted by supporters and auctioned during Refugee Week. The exhibition was coming together.

As we hunted for tablets to showcase the song and film, we came across someone on Facebook called Abdulazez Dukhan. He’s nineteen but left Homs in Syria four years ago – spending time in refugee camps in

Turkey and Greece. As a young photographer, he was determined to share with the world his images, mainly of children, both in these camps and in the war zone that is Syria. He’s in Belgium now but a friend of his was asking whether anyone in Hertfordshire could exhibit his work! After many weeks of intermittent communication – he was rarely online – Lisa drove to pick up eight framed photos which had been shown in Tunbridge

Wells... just days before our exhibition opened. I messaged Abdulazez about selling them for him, asking how much and how we would pay him. His reply: "I don't want money. I just want people to know." In addition to the powerful images available to hang, we asked his permission to share more in a slide show on another tablet. And no, technology is not my forte either – but I just about managed to control every device!

As I write this, the tour is half over and if I'm honest, we're disappointed by footfall and therefore by sales. It's a relief that I don't have to 'woman' it when it's far from home and we're grateful to Anne from TSL for moving her office to the two URC



churches near hers that have agreed to host. Two Mayors – of Milton Keynes and Berkhamsted Town – have expressed support. The Private View at The Paper Trail in Apsley was a positive occasion. On the other hand, there was a week where NOTHING was sold at all, not even a wristband, postcard or badge – and I admit that as Leslie drove me back from Harpenden, I sobbed a bit. But wiser souls like Trustee Cordelia point out that we never know who has seen and engaged with what we are sharing. In MK she met a documentary maker and he's coming to meet the team next week...

What have people made of the exhibition? Well, the words 'wonderful' and 'fantastic' have been used and many have recognised the breadth of it. Most often used is the word 'moving'. I think my abiding memory will be of my son and his girlfriend. They live in Apsley, and being between jobs, Philip was able to help me by hanging at the Paper Trail to give Leslie a much-needed break. A few days later they both came to look around, which they did slowly, intently and silently, missing nothing. His arm was around her and her eyes filled again and again. They were terribly, tenderly moved and loving them as I do, I loved them even more for that.

What we all hoped at PNB was that the exhibition would inspire people to act – in any way that makes a difference, however small. I'll be protesting outside Parliament on the anniversary of the closure of the camp in Calais, because 2000 refugee children are still homeless in and around the town. We've just become partners in the #Boots1000 Appeal, having donated enough to buy a fair number of robust boots for refugees in France, and by the time you read this our friends Brian and Angus from Herts for Refugees will have delivered a vanload. We have resumed collections using the box at the back of St Peter's, where people can drop anything on our list of essential basics anytime Monday to Saturday, and we're planning something for children, probably in Syria and Iraq: 'I am me' bags.

Please remember the picture book makes a wonderful Christmas present – and we can also offer a matching T-shirt for a child.

Sue Hampton

I am me by Sue Hampton

This is a children's book, written from the point of view of a child refugee, that caught me in my seventh decade; it is actually aimed for ages 4 – 7. In the delightful verse that it is written in, it gave me something quite profound to think about and at least two out loud laughs. Very well written indeed and beautifully illustrated, this is a small book to give a child but one that can make the adult reader think about an important issue that will affect us for the foreseeable future. Highly recommended.

Christina Billington

A Day in the Lakes

A few weeks ago I was invited to my godson's baptism and confirmation. So on a very wet and dark Sunday morning I pointed the car north for a day in the Lake District.

The plan was to arrive at our friends for a late breakfast in Grange-Over-Sands (just behind the Hazelmere cafe for those who know the town). Arriving in time for a bacon butty I stood outside in the sun admiring the perfect blue sky over Morecambe Bay - I checked and it was still raining in Berkhamsted.

It came time to head to the service for the baptism which was to take place on the shore of Coniston Lake where much of the filming for the recent version of *Swallows and Amazons* was made. With the blue skies it was a beautiful view down the

lake (we were at the Brown Howe viewing point). As we arrived the Sunday morning outdoor service was being wrapped up with the Anglican congregation starting to tuck into their lunchtime sandwiches.

We then had a short break as we waited for the vicar to make it out from the village to perform the baptism of Toby (my godson who is a similar age to Thomas) and a lady, a few years older than Toby, who was renewing her baptismal vows. Finally the vicar appeared running through the bushes and trees very flustered - he was late - thankfully he was ready for events in his black shirt, collar and, as tradition dictates, flowery bermuda shorts.

Margaret was first to be invited out for her renewal which, it transpired, was to be a full submersion in the lake. It wasn't an easy walk for her as the bottom of the lake was quite stony but with what was now two vicars helping she walked to a suitable spot. After the vows she was gently lowered into the water. The peace of the moment was then somewhat broken as the vicar lost his footing, lost his grip, a shriek and then two legs appeared from out of the water as the vicar went over in the lake - almost drowning Margaret in the process. Toby, in typical church attire of a wetsuit, was then baptised without incident and accompanied by his leader from the 'Flame' group which he has been attending - similar to Lighthouse at St Mary's. Very different to most baptisms but welcoming Toby into the church in such a natural environment with friends created a relaxed and welcoming feel to the baptism.

Later in the evening we had a more traditional service as Toby was confirmed with 12 other friends many of whom have been part of the Flame group. The service was led by the Bishop of Carlisle who also holds the role of Clerk of the Closet for the Queen - supplementing his income by a whole £7 per year (!!). ... all in all not a typical Sunday. Anyone interested in a

baptism should speak to Rachael but if she mentions the canal

Andrew Hawkins

Reformation

What do you remember about The Reformation? Martin Luther, perhaps, and his pinning 95 Theses on a church door in Wittenburg. Maybe the date: 1517 and 31st October to be precise. The Diet of Worms and his statement which followed it: “Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God.” or something about Henry VIII and the beginnings of the Church of England. In the year of its 500th Anniversary much has been written and spoken about The Reformation, as well as TV documentaries. It began as a protest by Martin Luther, an obscure German monk, against the practice of indulgences in the Roman Catholic Church. For Luther, grace, forgiveness and repentance were what mattered. It was “Justification by Faith”.

Reformation was the subject of this year’s Autumn Lecture Series at St Martin-in-the-Fields. Theologian, historian and priest, Alister McGrath, of Oxford University set the scene, and argued that Luther wanted to bring Christianity back to its New Testament origins: to renew Christianity with no need for structural change. The Roman Catholic Church was threatened by this. Renewal and refreshment did not happen and Luther eventually formed his own church. Martin Luther translated the bible into everyday German language, so opening God’s Word to everyone. Translation into English

followed and the development of the printing press spread the Word widely, narrowing the gap between the clergy and laity.

Looking back on The Reformation, Alister McGrath came to the realisation that Christianity would not cope with the social changes in the late Middle Ages. Change was almost inevitable. Christianity should be spoken in a language modern culture could understand to connect with the people and presented many challenges to the Church. These continue to the present day. Some of these challenges, or can they be called opportunities, were taken up in subsequent lectures. The series is entitled ***Reformation***.

The second session was *Reforming Church* and the speakers were Sam Wells, Vicar of St-Martin-in-the-Fields and Lucy Winkett, Rector of St James, Piccadilly. For Sam Wells, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John10:10) is a mission statement and a challenge to how churches are used. A vision of them celebrating creation, enjoying culture and sharing in flourishing life, offers opportunities to shape communities that portray God’s kingdom. Lucy Winkett questioned whether the Church today is grieving for a fantasy past, and also asked what is the place of the clergy in an increasingly bureaucratic institution. For her, Christianity should be an expression of human life, with the sacraments open to everyone;- marry any in love, bury all, abolish confirmation. Lucy Winkett saw this as a vision of the Church being a feast of life, in all its murkiness, with its message being “I love you”.

Reforming Marriage was considered next by three speakers; Nicholas Holtam, Bishop of Salisbury, the Dean of Leicester, David Monteith and Sally Hitchins, Chaplain at Brunel University. Nicholas Holtam spoke of himself as the token heterosexual on the panel. All three said

that the main challenge to the Church is how to meet the needs of couples in same-sex relationships for marriage or a blessing, and all agreed that if marriage, which had evolved over the centuries, is understood as essentially between one man and one woman, changes are needed today. Sally Hitchins argued that Martin Luther dropped any sense of shame about sex; also that women became the scapegoat for sexual desire. A point of focus for the Church in its debate, is that the people Jesus encountered were real; they were diverse and different and love always wins.

The lecture on *Reforming Attitudes to Race*, was fascinating. David Olusoga, a British-Nigerian historian, broadcaster and film-maker, spoke of the loss to British history of its black-African heritage. Britain has become, he argued, insular and lost its outward-looking big global story. He quoted many examples including our understanding of the South Sea Bubble, the cotton industry in Lancashire, the Battle of Trafalgar and drinking tea! He argued that a denial of black history defends racial divisions. Britishness does not make sense when these stories are removed, leading to a fantasy idea that Britain can again aspire to be a monochrome nation, something that it never was. Alongside David Olusoga was Liz Adekunle, Archdeacon of Hackney. Liz affirmed David's argument that black British history is part of our shared history, enriching lives and communities. God is a God of liberation and the Church as the Body of Christ should recognise and acknowledge difference and listen to untold stories, which affect our experience.

There was a different format for the fifth lecture, *Reforming Attitudes to Islam*, with Mona Siddiqui, a broadcaster and writer from Edinburgh University, and Joshua Ralston, also from Edinburgh who lectures in Muslim-Christian relations. The round table discussion was chaired by Sam Wells, Vicar of St Martin-in-the-Fields, whose

questions sparked an interesting exchange of views and experiences. Mona Siddiqui's concern was the West sees anything to do with Islam through the prism of violence. Joshua Ralston's interest in Islam was prompted by listening to Sudanese refugees in the USA responding to the question "What does it mean to live well?". The importance of conversation was at the heart of the discussion. Both agreed a new understanding of Islam is needed and our own history should not be forgotten if dialogue is to be meaningful. Mona Siddiqui's closing words were that conversations should be more than friendship. They need to be deeper, exploring difference and in fellowship finding a new acceptance and understanding of Islam.

The final lecture of the series, *Reforming Scripture*, was on 13th November, and too late for this Newsletter. The speaker was Ben Quash, Professor of Christianity and the Arts at Kings College, London. Ben had given the addresses at the Good Friday service in St Martin-in-the-Fields this year. He brought new insights to the story of Jesus' passion and crucifixion. *Reforming Scripture* should be interesting. It and the other 5 in the series can be found as a podcast on the St Martin's website, www.smitf.org - search Autumn Lecture Series.

These lectures have opened my eyes and brought a deeper understanding of The Reformation. I had thought of it as a single event, begun by Martin Luther, and given little consideration to its consequences for the 16th century, and any continuing religious and political impact. David Starkey, at the beginning of his television documentary on The Reformation described it as a Jihad (Holy War) and the first Brexit; a hard one, 16th century style. Both terms are in modern usage, but can be used to describe the political and religious turmoil of 500 years ago. It was a complex

movement, operating in different contexts over a long time. It raised many questions that have not gone away. A central one for the Church is whether Christianity should be unchanging, or engaging with new situations in cultural and national life. Do we dream dreams of the past or have visions for the future? It is a question for each generation. In the first lecture, Alister McGrath's answer was that Christianity can only stay the same by changing; it should be rooted in the past but not trapped by it. How to do this are the challenges and opportunities which the lecture series sought to explore, and provided much food for thought.

Margaret Burbidge

Christmas in West Africa

We arrived in Freetown, Sierra

Leone in Jan 1954. Both of us taught at the Methodist Boys' High School as Associates of the Methodist Missionary Society (MMS).

Our first Christmas there was spent living at Mamba Ridge, an isolated bungalow some distance outside Freetown. December and January was the best time for climate in Freetown. It was the dry season, temperatures were down to the 80s F, and the humidity was well below the usual 90%. This was because the Harmattan wind was blowing - a dry, dusty, cool wind blowing out from the High Pressure area over the Sahara desert. The relief from the high temperatures and humidity was so welcome that the locals called the wind "the doctor". We caught

that same wind for one day in southern England recently. Do you remember the strange light and the film of dust that covered our cars? Anyway, the change in weather helped us to make believe it was Christmas, like in England!

Freetown in those days was inhabited mainly by Creoles. These were descendants of slaves set free by the passing of the Anti-slave Trade Act in Britain in 1807. They were Christian, so celebrated Christmas with gusto. The Methodist and Anglican Churches were full; the local palm wine flowed along with Akpeteshi - a potent, illegally distilled brew. David was the only white Englishman teaching at the MBHS, (there had been an Africanisation policy since 1921). The result was that our social circle was limited to the staff at Fourah Bay College (part of the University of Durham). These did their best to replicate an English Christmas in the tropics, particularly if there were children. Friends were particularly important at Christmas time. We were far from our families and the only means of communication was by letter. In nine years in West Africa not once did we use the telephone. News of the birth of our children was by telegram! That first Christmas in Sierra Leone we had no children, although June was eight months pregnant! The Agriculture department at Fourah Bay College had a farm, and they laid on a hog-roast at Christmas. Christmas afternoon was spent on the beach, swimming and eating June's Christmas cake. It felt bizarre (not the cake).

We went on furlough in Autumn 1955 and our parents were able to meet their first grandchild - Judith. We were now faced with a major problem, which was to remain with us all the time we were in West Africa - Christmas presents! As there were no toy shops we had to buy presents for the children months ahead in England (sometimes two Christmases ahead), hide

them and create the fiction of Father Christmas delivering them to Freetown and later Cape Coast. Of course clothing for the children presented the same problem. We bought ahead of need while we were on leave in UK.

In July 1957 we moved to Cape Coast, Ghana, to teach at Mfantshipim School, a Methodist Boys' Boarding School for 11 to 18 yr olds. Half the staff were Ghanaian graduates and half British. We lived on a large compound, close to the boarding houses of the boys, and David was a housemaster. What a contrast to Freetown! We lived in a community of 50 or more staff plus 700 boys. Apart from the teaching, the site was a hive of activity - sport, Scouts, a Shakespeare play twice a year, a staff choir. When the boys went home for Christmas there was still plenty going on. Our children could join all the other children for Christmas parties, and the adults could play bridge, tennis, sing carols and do all the Christmas things they did in England. We still went to the beach on Christmas afternoon, this time under the walls of Elmina Castle, built in the 18th century to hold the captives before they were shipped as slaves to the New World.

Mfantshipim had a wonderful modern chapel where staff and their families attended Christmas services. The sides were open so we could look across the forested hills as we worshipped. We also went into Cape Coast to the large Gothic style Methodist Church. Services were conducted in a mixture of English and the Fante language. All were dressed in their best Kente cloths - very colourful. The singing was enthusiastic and in full harmony, and the sermon was punctuated by appreciative "Amens". The celebration of the birth of the Christ-child meant much to us and to the Ghanaians, whose strong faith was an inspiration to us ex-pats. It was appropriate also that mothers breastfed

their babies during the long sermons.

We returned to the UK in June 1962 with our four children. It was wonderful to celebrate Christmas with our families again, and they loved having the children home. But we missed our friends, and Christmas afternoon on the beach.

David Williamson

Christmas 1984

Between January 1984 and July 1988

David and I were both working in the Cayman Islands where David was Principal of the Cayman Islands High School and I was running a unit for children with learning difficulties at the Catholic primary school. As our first Christmas approached the thought of being away from our children and grandchildren was too much to contemplate. We had to find a different way to spend Christmas and one very quickly came to mind - skiing in the USA. Years before, skiing in half term made us forget (temporarily) the stress of the classroom as all our physical and mental facilities were needed to ensure we got down the mountain without disaster.

So a few days before Christmas saw us in Colorado ready to face the slopes of the Rockies. We had settled in to a small lodge run by a very friendly couple and were joined by six other guests including a family from St Albans.

Next day we tried not to let our thoughts drift back to families in UK and enjoyed the glorious sunshine as we concentrated on remembering our skiing techniques. The slopes in America are very much longer and wider than those in Europe and the runs at Winter Park were

all named after characters from Alice in Wonderland. So in the morning we might ski down The Cheshire Cat and later do The White Rabbit or Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

On Christmas Eve after a day on the slopes we skied down through the woods to our lodge where minutes later we were sitting with our new friends in a hot tub as the snowflakes settled on our heads - it really was a white Christmas.

During the day our hosts had put up a Christmas tree and decorations and there was a festive air and excitement as we sat down to dinner. We were just about to eat our desert when there was a loud thud above us and a scratching and scraping noise. We all looked up, worried at what had hit the roof. Suddenly the door burst open. "Happy Christmas" shouted a jolly figure dressed in red with a sack over his shoulder and he then proceeded to give all of us a present. "Can't stop long- lots to do tonight" and he was gone. As we listened we heard the scraping of the reindeers hooves as he flew off. Christmas had begun. Later that evening our host (now relieved of his Father Christmas duties) took us all out to the ski slopes where, as is their tradition, all the ski instructors ski down the mountain carrying torches and weaving patterns in the snow - it was a magical evening.

Christmas Day in a remote chalet in the Rockies - no mobile phones, no way to contact the family, no nearby church but where better to say your thanks for God's precious gift than on a mountain top. Again the sun was shining on the new fallen snow as we set off on our favourite run "The Mad Hatters Tea Party". The slopes were much more crowded today and it soon became apparent that everyone had received skis for Christmas as it became increasingly difficult to avoid the bodies lying in the snow. Did they all think they could ski without a lesson? However there was a real festive air on the slopes that day. Many had

added Christmas hats, tinsel and stars to their ski wear and in spite of the many tumbles were celebrating this special day.

Our hosts had a special Christmas dinner of turkey and Christmas pudding- obviously to please their English friends - and after we had eaten, joined us singing carols round the piano. It was snowing hard outside as we sang, "In the bleak mid winter, snow had fallen, snow on snow.....a stable place sufficed, the Lord God almighty, Jesus Christ" All the familiar carols were enjoyed but one I always associate with America "Joy to the world, the Lord is come.....the wonders of his love" We had at the end of the day celebrated the real meaning of Christmas. Four days later we were back in the heat of 80 degrees in the Cayman Islands.

June Williamson

A Carol of Straw

Two years ago I contributed to a series of articles in the Newsletter in which the writers said what their favourite Christmas carols were. One year ago my favourite, *It came upon a midnight clear*, was not used at any of the services at All Saints. We did, however, sing my unfavourite carol, *See him a'lying on a bed of straw*.

There is biblical authority for Jesus having been laid in a manger, (which is more than can be said for other traditional trappings to the Christmas story such as donkeys). A manger is intended to hold fodder, and it is supported two or three feet above the ground to prevent the animals trampling on the fodder. It does not contain straw. Wheat straw is stiff and brittle and

has no place in animal husbandry; barley straw is used for bedding but has no nutritive value, so would not be put into a manger.

An unknown American author wrote an otherwise twee carol, but at least he (or quite probably she) got the fodder right – *Away in a manger ... the little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.*

The July/August issue of the diocesan newsletter, *See Round*, contained an article about a scheme in Bengoe parish of paying not to have hymns people did not like or had sung too often.

What price not to have straw in the manger at All Saints?

Keith Treves-Brown

A Christmas Acrostic Poem

Beautiful baby born this night
Eternal life to bring
The ox and ass bow down their heads
Happily they share their manger of soft hay
Low murmurs come from outside as
awestruck shepherds follow the star
Eyes shine with amazement to see the
wondrous scene
Hallelujahs sound as angels homage pay
Eastern shines the brilliant star above the
lowly stable
Magi arrive with precious gifts to lay at the
feet of the babe

Bethlehem is ablaze with love because of
the special birth
Sue Doggett

Impressions of Life in Other Places part 2

The Rockies and the Canadian Prairies by train

From Vancouver we travelled through

the Rockies by train which were very magnificent, despite the smoke pall from summer fires. As in Scotland there are lovely rivers which the train followed. through amazing rocky, arid valleys. Jasper was full of walkers and tourists. There was one lone cyclist from Hamburg who was re-assembling his bike which had been difficult to carry around by train. In Europe bicycles form a common part of train baggage.

We travelled across the Canadian Prairies for four days and nights. The wheatlands were surprisingly pleasant with occasional villages on very small raised areas in a landscape of small rolling inclines and dips with occasional clumps of birch trees and ditches with ducks and many small ponds - presumably for drainage. The gentle rise and fall and small colour changes including the white birch bark made a good backdrop for meditation and dreaming. The monotonous dark green conifers lay more to the north of our journey again as we went east towards Toronto and Montreal. I had to look at something and find interest, which I found directly beside the train where lovely rudbeckias grew and pink lychnis and many vetches and blue flowers - lupins perhaps and vipers bugloss. On one of our train stops we picked wild raspberries and blueberries growing beside the railway. There were many large butterflies - the whole length of the western coast and in Canada - which looked like the Swallowtail family. In California and Oregon we could

watch eagles and ospreys and many water birds from the train but through Canada I managed to see only one raptor and the ducks in the ditches. In Vancouver we did see a hummingbird in a garden and they are regular visitors.

I was surprised to see two huge, Russian looking churches in adjacent villages in the middle of nowhere. A Ukranian /Czechoslovakian oil technician who was travelling on the train explained that there were many people like himself in central Canada. There was also a French Canadian farmer from Ontario who explained that French people had settled originally right across Canada. Our Montreal friends had grandchildren in French speaking schools near to Ottawa and Toronto.

Canada was a surprising place on closer acquaintance. We found the people everywhere very kind and courteous and thoughtful; slower moving and quieter speaking than their American neighbours.

Montreal

I had lived in Montreal nearly fifty years' ago which I had greatly enjoyed but I had not travelled around the rest of Canada. When we finally reached Montreal, ten hours late, at 2.00am we relaxed in a charming old hotel in the east section of Montreal where our French Canadian host fetched the bread and croissants each morning for breakfast. (We had also found good bread in Vancouver Island in a special local bakery). It was a pleasure to have access to good French food. I was shy to use my French beside the local Quebecois which had been jealously preferred fifty years' ago. However I found that people were more than happy to speak to me in ordinary French and seemed happier to do so rather than English which most people also spoke well. Montreal now felt more settled and comfortable with itself than it had during Expo 67.

Again, birds were not numerous apart from the joy of many sparrows. Green areas

beside the St Lawrence and the splendid Mont Royale were pleasant but gardening in Canada did not generally seem to be of great interest. Pavements and little streets and pedestrian walkways were common and it was normal and pleasant to walk or cycle in Vancouver and Montreal.

New York and the Atlantic

We ended our trip in New York before taking the boat home. I have always enjoyed moving around in New York because it feels similar to London. Pavements are full of people as are Central Park and the little squares. This year we had the pleasure of exploring the Highline which is the old goods high level railway for delivery to the shops and businesses. It has been lying unused and gathering, not dust, but trees and flowers. Local New Yorkers of the delightful and crazy kind have taken over the area and finally persuaded the City not to demolish it but rather to add to the planting, and formalise a pathway amongst the old railway tracks. There are seats to rest in under maturing trees and many butterflies and flowers. An area of flowing water has been added where you can cool your feet and splash around and several little cafés have appeared. Always there is a wonderful view of the Hudson River. Access is frequent from the streets underneath. It is a great joy and also a considerable tourist attraction. Birds have definitely discovered that foliage here is as safe a home as Central Park where a large number of warblers thrive.

Our sea journey over the Atlantic was uneventful but the constant walking around the boat - three times around equalled one mile - gave us an opportunity to watch the sea. We could watch it in the swimming pool and even better in the hot tub. The ocean was constantly interesting in a force five or so wind, throwing up wonderful dark green and turquoise troughs and white crests. Around the Newfoundland Banks there were many sea birds like shearwaters

gliding over the waves, and then apparently nothing until we came nearer to the Irish coast. Lone gannets, began to appear and guillemots and other ocean loving gulls like kittiwakes. One flew right down the ship's deck in the middle of nowhere. Some passengers saw dolphins and we have seen sperm whales on other trips but the Atlantic is a wonderful and mighty empty space that holds your attention whatever the weather.

Felicity White



The Revd Monsignor Georges Lemaitre and the Big Bang

I am sure you have all heard of Albert

Einstein, Fred Hoyle, Stephen Hawking - and perhaps Roger Penrose, with his local connection. But who was Georges Lemaitre?

Born in 1894, he became a Belgian Catholic Priest, astronomer and professor of physics at the Catholic University of Leuven. He proposed the theory of the expansion of the universe, widely misattributed to Edwin Hubble. Lemaitre also proposed what became known as the Big Bang theory of the origin of the universe, which he called his "hypothesis of the primeval atom" or the "Cosmic Egg".

Lemaitre studied civil engineering in Leuven at the age of 17, interrupting his studies in 1914 to serve as an artillery officer in the Belgian army during the First World War, for which he received the Belgian War Cross with palms. After the war he studied maths and physics and began to prepare for the diocesan priesthood. He was ordained in 1923. Study in astronomy at Cambridge (with Arthur Eddington) was followed by further study in the United States.

In 1925 he returned to Belgium and became a part-time lecturer at the Catholic University of Leuven. In 1927 he presented his idea of an expanding universe, but it was not widely read outside Belgium. He came to London to speak at a meeting of the British Association in 1931, where he proposed that the universe expanded from an initial point, which he called the "Primeval Atom". Lemaitre himself also described his theory as "the Cosmic Egg exploding at the moment of the creation"; it became better known as the "Big Bang

theory," a term coined during a 1949 BBC radio broadcast by the astronomer Fred Hoyle, who was then still a proponent of the steady state universe and remained so until his death in 2001.

In 1933 Lemaître published a more detailed version in the *Annals of the Scientific Society of Brussels*, and achieved his greatest public recognition. Newspapers around the world called him a famous Belgian scientist and described him as the leader of the new cosmological physics.

By 1951, Pope Pius XII declared that Lemaître's theory provided a scientific validation for Catholicism. However, Lemaître resented the Pope's proclamation, stating that the theory was neutral and there was neither a connection nor a contradiction between his religion and his theory. He persuaded the Pope to stop making proclamations about cosmology. While a devout Roman Catholic, he was against mixing science with religion, though he also was of the opinion that these two fields of human experience were not in conflict.

At the end of his life, he was increasingly devoted to problems of numerical calculation. Since 1930, he used the most powerful calculating machines of the time, the Mercedes. In 1958 he was introduced to the University's Burroughs E101, its first electronic computer. Lemaître maintained a strong interest in the development of computers.

He died on 20 June 1966, shortly after having learned of the discovery of cosmic microwave background radiation, which provided further evidence for his proposal about the birth of the universe. One of the more surprising current references to him is in the name of the Norwegian indie band, Lemaitre! (Information from Wikipedia).

Ruth Treves Brown

A stingy miser

A stingy miser worked hard all of his life and made a lot of money. He loved that money more than just about anything and rarely spent a dime.

On his deathbed he said to his wife, "Promise me that you'll put all my money in the casket with me. I want to take it all to the afterlife with me. Promise!"

His wife promised him, with all of her heart, that she would indeed put all his money in the casket with him.

So then he died. He was stretched out in the casket, his wife sitting there in black, with her best friend beside her. After the ceremony the wife slipped a box into the casket just before it was closed.

The wife's friend clutched her by the sleeve and hissed, "Tell me you weren't fool enough to put all that money in there with that man!"

The wife replied, "Listen, I can't break a solemn promise and I promised to put his money in the casket with him."

"You mean to tell me you actually put all his money in there?"

"I sure did," said the dutiful wife. "I wrote him a check for the full amount."

Some Christmas Book Titles

Whey in a manger by M.N. Tal - a story of improvised cheesemaking

The big boys book of brussels sprouts - a compendium of festive brassicas by R. Sperry Tart

Crackers nuts fruit cake and cold turkey - a psychiatric study of Christmas by Dr Juan Horst Oppenslay

Life (part 1)

As Christians we see life in two related ways, our physical and spiritual lives. In this and articles to follow I consider both these forms of life in a contemporary way, including how modern understanding links with Christian doctrine. In this first article I focus on our physical life, the period from our conception to our earthly death.

Our parents played a key role in our formation. At the time of our conception their DNA combined to form 23 pairs of chromosomes, structures of nucleic acid and protein, that make us what we are. This unique sequence of chromosomes is replicated in every cell of our bodies. In this way our parents passed to us the key of life and determined all our physical characteristics. One pair of chromosomes determined our sex. If you are male your dad passed on to you his Y chromosome and your mother one of her two X chromosomes. If you are female your dad passed on his X chromosome and your mother one of her two X chromosomes. In this way our DNA is passed down from one generation to another.

As a part of the study of my family history I had my Y chromosome analysed by Oxford Ancestry. It appears that my male DNA signature first arose 20 thousand years ago (about 650 to 700 generations ago) and is found predominantly in Georgia (Russia), Norway, Iceland, Poland as well as the UK.

This probably means that my ancestors migrated across northern Europe after the last Ice Age and arrived in England with either the Vikings or Anglo Saxons. During the medieval period one of my English male ancestors was called

Thomas and his son became known as the "Son of Thomas" or Thompson.

But how did life begin in the first place? Before we can begin to answer this question we must first consider some of the fundamental issues on which life depends. Elements, minute parcels of energy of different atomic weights, that make up the organic molecules in our bodies, such as oxygen, carbon, calcium and phosphorus, are known to have been originally created by nuclear fusion, a natural process that takes place deep within stars. As stars die and explode at the end of their evolution, these elements, along with many others, are scattered across the universe. In this way the building blocks needed for life originally came from outer space.

The energy we need to thrive and be active comes from photosynthesis, a process that takes place in plants. With the aid of radiated energy from our nearest star, sunlight, plants convert carbon dioxide and water into sugar and oxygen. The food we eat (vegetables, greens and meat) contains carbohydrates, mixtures of sugar, starches and fibres. Meat is an important source of carbohydrates in our diet. Farm animals get their carbohydrates solely from plants, mainly grasses, which forms part of their body's tissues which we consume. Our bodies digest our food by mixing it with acids and enzymes in our stomachs. During the process of digestion carbohydrates are broken down into glucose, a form of energy that circulates in the blood stream and allows us to thrive and be active. It is by this remarkable chain of conversion that we obtain the energy we need to live.

The recent discoveries of organic molecules in deep space, nucleic acid on meteorites, and the way volcanoes create amino acids both on earth and other planets raise the possibilities that life on earth was initially seeded from outer space and exists elsewhere in the universe. Much effort is

currently being put into locating planets circulating around distant stars where conditions are right for life to exist. Progress is rapid and it is widely anticipated that life in other parts of the universe will one day be found.

All this clearly shows we are a natural and integral part of the universe and that our origins, survival and fate are linked to it. The universe began about 13.8 billion years ago with the release of enormous amounts of energy, popularly known as the "Big Bang". We have discovered a great deal about the energy that was released over the recent past. The Laws of Thermodynamics, or the Laws of the Universe as they are sometimes known, show that energy cannot be destroyed but can be converted from one form to another. This means that the energy released at the beginning of creation still exists in the universe today, albeit in many different forms. The universe and life on earth have evolved, life by mutation and natural selection, to become perfectly matched to the environment on earth. The energy from which our bodies are made and sustained is a part of that released at the beginning. The same energy also powers every movement we make and every thought of love, joy and sorrow we experience. This is the true miracle of God's creation.

God is made apparent to us by the universe itself, the cradle of mankind and all forms of life, and God's everlasting presence is the energy from which everything is made and sustained. Energy is at the centre of everything God created, it is God's equivalent to our DNA. Since the energy from which our bodies and thoughts are made existed before we were born and continues to exist after we die, our life and earthly death are but mere transformations in the way we exist. Our existence, like that of the universe itself, never ends. This was implied in the Dean of St Alban's 2016 Easter Sermon, when he said, "Rebirth

through death is the pattern of all our moving on". We came from God's universe and remain a part of it when we move on. We exist as human beings by the grace of God and as part of God's plan. We are in every sense the "children of God" and given life as human beings to play our part and do God's work on earth.

Read again what a Gnostic Christian wrote in a letter to a man called Rheginus nearly two thousand years ago, "Since we are visibly present in the world, we wear the garment of the world. From (God) the Saviour we radiate like beams of light and we are sustained by him until our sunset, our death in this life. (On our earthly death) we are drawn upward by him, like rays by the sun, and nothing holds us down. This is the resurrection of the spirit" (The Treatise on Resurrection, Nag Hammadi Scriptures). What amazing insight!

Peter Thompson

A Christmas Acrostic Poem

Churches and communities gathering together to celebrate this

Holy season.

Red berries on the holly, scarlet noses too

It is joyful and bright.

Snow might fall tonight,

Tummies full of roast dinner.

Magic is in the air

All is festive and jolly,

Stockings waiting to be opened!

By Vonda Herbert

Age: 11

Phakamisa Newsletter

Devotions: Devotions still play a special role for our care givers when we praise and worship together. The care givers also get a chance to make their prayer requests and the group pray together. The word of God is being shared amongst them. Prayer requests are usually around family conflicts, poverty within the families, sicknesses, grandchildren, unemployment and drug abuse, death of family members and many more. The care givers believe very strongly in the Phakamisa prayers; this is usually noticed when they give feedback during the devotions. Gogo Ndlovu shared the following: “My daughter was accused of copying during an exam. She was then told that they won’t mark her paper and it was her final exam paper. What was most painful was, when she went to write the exam her brother’s body was coming home as his funeral was going to be held the next day.” She was in tears when she was sharing that. Mrs Ndlovu came back after some time sharing that Phakamisa prayers were heard by God. She was dancing and singing worshipping the Lord. “My daughter was found not guilty and she passed her exams. She graduated in September and she’s now employed in our local school as a teacher.” During devotions the care givers will stand up and say that Phakamisa devotions keep them going as they believe that their prayers will always be answered.

Healthy Living: Physical training keeps our care givers healthy. They also like the exercise class in the morning. One care giver once said to us: “Thank you so much, director, for organising the gym for us: it keeps us very fit. You won’t believe that during the days that I am not here at Phakamisa I walk every day at home. I go to the sports ground and walk five times around and now I have been joined by

other gogos (old ladies) in my neighbourhood.”

Thursday in Black: Thursday in black is one of our awareness raising events. It is the awareness against domestic violence. We usually do this awareness on our last Thursday before the end of our first term. The care givers like this celebration so much that they now invite their friends and neighbours as well. We had about 500 people who participated in this event this year. We invited guest speakers to address the issues of: Cancer awareness, Rape, HIV/AIDS and Kidney Failure. It was good to hear from one male member, Mr Shabalala, challenging Phakamisa to reach out to the communities as well. He said “Thank you for inviting us to this awareness raising event. I think it’s high time that Phakamisa do this event in our communities not only within the Phakamisa premises. Many people will be saved by this information shared here”.

ECD Graduations Child Minder – The Child Minder course is our six months training course that started in January. One hundred and twenty teachers graduated from the Child Minder course in June. The graduation went very well and for them it is a big achievement. It was very interesting to speak to one of the teacher’s husband during the graduation day. He said: “This feels like an achievement for myself. At least even if I die now I know that my wife has something that cannot be taken away from her, that will assist her in the future. Thank you, Phakamisa, for this reasonable cost for training, and she will definitely come again for the one year EduCare Supervisor course of which thirty supervisors were trained this year.

Women’s Day Celebration: We had a high tea party for the care givers to end our celebrations for women’s month. Our dress code was headwrap and any bright colours as we were also celebrating and welcoming Spring. The theme of the day was FILL UP

MY CUP. This idea came from observing and listening during our devotions. I found that most of our care givers have forgotten about themselves and are carrying so much pain, hurt and anger. Different speakers were invited addressing different topics, reminding our caregivers that they are special and that they also play a very important role within their families and the communities they live in, even if they feel unrecognized. I have never seen the caregivers so happy. The feedback received was very positive. One care giver said: "I thank God for allowing me to attend today. I feel light as if I was no longer carrying a heavy load on my back. May God bless you all at Phakamisa and grant you more wisdom in everything you do. This event was really meant for me." The topics covered that day were: 'You are a woman of virtue'; 'You are a phenomenal woman'; 'Dealing with invisible wounds' and 'Indeed, you are a woman of worth'.

Wandering Schools: Our Wandering Schools have been renovated and toilets have been built for the children. The children that are five years old will be graduating at the end of November. This will be the first graduation in Phakamisa for our Wandering Schools. The idea of the graduation came from the caregivers of the children, and this shows the relationship that Phakamisa has with the community that it serves.

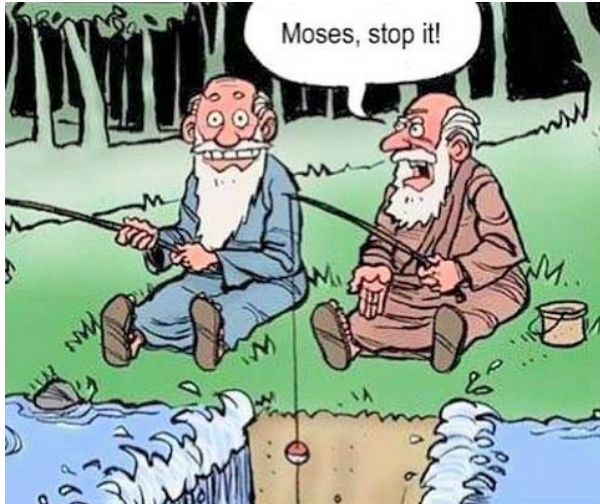
Accredited Course: Our Level 4 that we started this year is doing very well. More teachers have approached our offices wanting to be enrolled at Phakamisa next year. Phakamisa has received more recognition from other sectors as well. It felt so good to hear that our teachers are getting some assistance as they are attending Phakamisa ECD (Early Childhood Development) training. Our teacher, Sylva Cele from Molweni area, came to the office and informed us of the following, "My crèche was damaged by the

floods and I went to approach some people from disaster management for assistance and they asked me to bring a letter from Phakamisa that I am a student." We wrote a letter for her and she came back very happy to tell us that her crèche will be fixed as she has received a confirmation letter from the municipality. Her words: I am so grateful to a friend that introduced me to Phakamisa. Phakamisa make things happen for us.

Skills Development: Our focus is on income generating whereby the caregivers are trained in skills that will assist them in generating some sort of income. The beadwork group has started to do more traditional necklaces and bangles which has been well supported and has given more exposure to Phakamisa. The sewing group learnt to make school shirts and trousers. Cooking: The caregivers in this class have been trained in making home-made custard and jelly powder. They have also been trained to make home-made juice using fresh fruits.

Conclusion: I would like to thank everyone for the support that is continually given to us. Without you Phakamisa couldn't have been seen or acknowledged in the communities. May God richly bless you.

Thokozani Poswa the director of Phakamisa



Sermon for Epiphany

January 1st 2017 Jenny Harris

(Edited for length)

Over the centuries there have been

attempts to make the story of the visit by the kings more exciting. There is one story about the star in the East which says that when the star had finished its task of directing the wise men to the baby, it fell from the sky and dropped down into the city well of Bethlehem. According to the legend, that star is there to this day, and can sometimes still be seen by those whose hearts are pure and clean. We do not know whether there were three of them, or whether they were men at all, let alone the glorious names given them by tradition, Melchior, Balthasar and Casper. These stories bring the wise men a little more to life, and add some colour to the story, but they hold no more historic value than the visit of the little drummer boy.

The sad thing is that there is no need for embellishment. There is enough in the story when we really look at it!

At the start of the nativity story we are told in Luke that Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. In Rome Caesar Augustus was at the height of his power. He was the adopted son of Julius Caesar, and had become sole ruler of the Roman world after a bloody civil war in which he had overpowered his opponents.

He was the one who turned the great Roman Republic into an Empire, with himself at the head. He proclaimed that he had brought peace and justice to the world. He declared his dead adoptive father to be divine, and by implication he was the son of God.

At this time far away from Rome a boy was born, who would within a generation be

Christmas one liners

What do you call a kid who doesn't believe in Santa?

A rebel without a Claus.

What do you call an elf who sings?

A wrapper!

Why is Christmas just like your job?

You do all the work and the fat guy with the suit gets all the credit.

Why are Christmas trees so fond of the past?

Because the present's beneath them.

What do you get if you eat Christmas decorations?

Tinselitis!

hailed as 'son of God.' His arrival was considered to have brought true justice and peace. The birth of this little boy is the beginning of a confrontation between the kingdom of God in all its apparent frailty, weakness and insignificance, with the mighty power of Rome.

Augustus had never heard of Jesus but within a century his successors were trying desperately to obliterate his followers. Within just over three centuries the Roman Emperor Constantine himself became a Christian.

So, the story of a baby in a crib, being visited by Magi is powerful. It is about a change taking place in the balance of power.

We don't know much about the Magi from the East. They are accurately described as "wise men", that is, they were interested in understanding wisdom and mysteries. Daniel, yes the one with the lions, was promoted to the rank of Magi when he served the Persian Empire. We can think of them as astronomers, mystics, or scientists. Some Magi were religious leaders. Some of the "magic" that they practised was closer to what we call the natural sciences than it was to magic. They were well known for their observations of nature. And for the wisdom they gained from observing nature.

So these were probably indeed wise men, who had studied the writings of many religions and were aware of the world around them.

And "Where did they come from?" All the Bible says is that they came from the East. However many believe that Isaiah was foretelling their arrival when he said, "the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come". "They shall bring Gold and Frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord." Whether they came from Midian and Ephah and Sheba or not is unclear.

What is clear is that they had come from foreign lands in a day when long distance travel was not easy. These wise and powerful Gentiles did something that that world must have considered very strange. They came to honour and worship the king of the Jews.

The Jews were a conquered people so why not honour the Romans who conquered them. And this king had no apparent kingdom. It seems odd that Magi should honour this poor homeless infant. But we know that these were indeed wise men. They knew that this was not an ordinary king of an ordinary kingdom.

This homeless child was the Messiah sent from God to bring peace and justice to the world.

The world may have thought it strange to bring precious gifts to the son of a carpenter's wife.

When I was in the Holy Land I was told that gold is a gift given to kings, frankincense a gift for a God and myrrh is a gift for a healer.

The Magi knew what they were doing; the true irony comes from those close at hand. They travelled across the known world to honour Jesus, but those in his own back yard failed to recognize him. He was born the king of the Jews, but only a few Jewish shepherds honoured him. The Jews had supposedly been watching for the Messiah for hundreds of years.

So who are these Magi? We are the Magi. In a very real sense all who have found salvation in Christ are represented by them.

Like them we have seen the darkness of our lives. Like them we have looked to heaven for some hope. Like them the light of Christ has shone in our lives and given us hope. And like them we have sought out and found the one born the King of the Jews.

This is what Epiphany is really all about. It is us understanding who Jesus is and what he is about.

So what is our understanding? Have we embarked upon that journey of discovery, like the Magi? We are a pilgrim people, we have to set off to follow Christ and learn more about God as we journey.

What the Magi saw was hardly impressive; a poor family in a nondescript village and an infant. However, the Magi had been led by the light of the star. Was it really a huge star in the heavens like the Christmas show, or a small brightness of Jupiter or even as some Christians believe, an interior light that kept them looking and then shone brightly for them revealing the truth at the end of their quest?

Today, we, like the Magi, ask God to stir up a hunger in us. For the courage to let go of the comfortable and familiar and request the energy to once again go looking for God. To be open to finding the holy in unfamiliar and "unholy" places. May we also have a sense of awe and wonder, the spirit of a searcher, one willing to look up and follow a star beyond familiar borders. May we recognize the revelation of God, despite all appearances to the contrary.

For many this idea is an unsettling and uncomfortable idea, a journey in which we do not know the landmarks; where we will have to keep trusting the voice inside that urges us not to turn back or stop. There will be questions for all of us and we will change direction and move in different ways, this is all a part of the pilgrimage and shows that we are capable of growth towards maturity.

It is a frightening thing to place one foot in front of another and trust that we will find the way, yet we walk that path with the hand of God. The kings came from far away seeking the Christ child, led by the light of a star. People today are still seeking God's light.

There are more people today who have no contact with the church than in any time in our society's history. There are people today who have never been in a church and

have no knowledge of the life of Christ. We are at home with the stories of Jesus, but to them they are a foreign land; a strange country. They dwell in darkness having never seen the light of Christ.

And these people are seeking. They know they are in darkness and they are seeking the light. They are looking for God, for inner peace, for abundant life. And they don't know where to turn.

What do they need? They need a star to guide them, just like the wise men. They need someone to guide them through a strange country of Christian traditions to the foreign city of God's word. They need someone to lead them through the maze of streets. To get them past the palaces and malls to the manger where Christ lives so that they can worship and offer their gifts.

Sadly we the church often fail to do this. It's like we have forgotten that the light is here. The wise of the world come to us and say, "Where is the one who is born the light of the world, the king of the Jews." And we say, "The what of the who?"

God has entrusted us with the knowledge that God's light has come. We must spread that word. God gave a star for the wise men who sought the true light. And God has given the Church for those seek the light today. Shine with the light of Christ. Tell others and show others his love and abundant life.

And guide them to the manger so that they can kneel with the shepherds of God's people.

A Christmas Acrostic Poem

Christ was born, carols were sung and church bells were rung

Happiness is spread around the world every Christmas morning

Remembering Jesus' birth

Icing on cakes for everyone to share, eat by yourself or in a pair.

Santa's coming soon!

Tummies rumbling tight for food

Merry Christmas to all!

At last the day has come!

Super-duper Christmas fun!

By Louisa Herbert

Age: 9

On Prayer

In our House Group on Tuesday November 7th Carol Atkinson helped us to look at some new and interesting ways of praying. We looked at some websites - see below - and talked about The Examen' - found at www.ignatianspirituality.com, a helpful way of reviewing your day as you go to bed at night.

A selection of gospel references:

Luke 10:21; Luke 11: 1-13; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12; Luke 9:28; Matt 14:23; Mark 14:36; Matt 5:43-44; Matt 26:36-40; John 11:41-42; John 17:20; Luke 4:16; Mark 14:26.

A selection of on-line resources

Pray as you go <https://pray-as-you-go.org/home> A selection of different prayers including 3 versions of the Examen; a daily reading with prayer guidance; breathing and relaxation exercises and some examples of contemplative prayer based on gospel stories. You may like to 'go deeper'.

www.sacredspace.ie/about - daily prayers with additional help and guidance available if you want it. Prepared by Jesuits.

Daily prayer app - google *daily prayer* and the app comes up. Gives morning, evening and night prayer including the readings for the day.

www.oremus.org similar to daily prayer but a broader selection.

www.johnmain.org Meditative prayer using Maranatha

www.orthodoxprayer.org Scroll through to Jesus Prayer. Meditative prayer using the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have mercy on me a sinner".

A small selection of books

God of surprises - Gerard Hughes

Contemplative prayer - Thomas Merton

Beyond Words - Patrick Woodhouse

Prayer: Letters to Malcolm - C.S. Lewis

Pocket prayers compiled by Christopher Herbert

Prayer - does it make any difference? - Philip Yancey

Sleeping with Bread - by Dennis, Sheila and Matthew Linn - on the Examen

Finding your Hidden Treasure - The way of

Silent Prayer - by Benignus O'Rourke

The Cry of the Deer - Meditations on the Hymn of St Patrick by David Adam

From the Bottom of the Pond - by Simon Small

Into the Silent Land - by Martin Laird

The Intercessions Handbook - Creative Ideas for private and public prayer by John Pritchard

Ruth Treves Brown and Carol Atkinson have copies of these if you are interested in looking at them.

In aid of Church funds

Pottery afternoon on Saturday 6th January in the Church Hall, from 2pm to 4pm.

Cost £10.00. Cheque to be made out to All Saints Church.

The clay will be sold at cost price on the day at 50p a half kilo.

One piece will be fired at no extra charge.

All ages over 6 years will be welcome and no one is too old!

I think I must be the oldest member of the church at 94 years! Modelling is great fun and is not difficult. Samples will be on show to copy or stimulate ideas. A demonstration will be given for those who need some guidance.

Ring 875724 to book or send a cheque to me at 21 Priory Gardens.

Please bring an apron, and a piece of wood or chipboard, or even an old table mat or tile, approximately 16cms square as a base to work on.

Come and have a very enjoyable afternoon as well as contributing to our Church funds at the same time.

Lyn Curtis

Blue Christmas Service

Thursday 21st December at 5pm

This year at All Saints', in amongst all the usual services, we are trying something different - a Blue Christmas service

What is a Blue Christmas service?

Christmas is usually known as a happy, joyful time, but that isn't true for everyone.

A Blue Christmas service is an opportunity for us to acknowledge the sadness, loneliness, anxiety that many people feel, but is often hidden.

What will the service include?

There will be familiar carols, but the quieter ones, readings and time to reflect and pray.

Who is it for?

Anyone who wants to recognise Christmas in a quiet way which recognises the reality of the ups and downs of life.

All are welcome to attend.

Rachael Hawkins

Prayers for Streets

We have now begun our 14th cycle of prayer for Streets. As usual I would be very grateful to hear from anyone who could deliver in one of the following roads. The dates given are *the Sundays* when we pray for our neighbours living in that road. The cards need to be delivered during the previous week. Thank you.

Penny O'Neill (843422 or 07836259008).

December

3 Kitsbury Road (below Charles Street).

10 Kitsbury Road (above Charles Street)

with Hamilton Road and Kitsbury Terrace.

17 Shrublands Avenue (up to number 50).

January

7 Shrublands Avenue (up from number 51).

14 Greenway (from Cross Oak to Finch Road). *Delivery arranged*

21 Gilbert Way. *Delivery arranged*

28 Greenway (from Finch Road going west). *Delivery arranged*

Julian Meetings

We normally meet roughly fortnightly at Ruth's at 11.30 am. All are very welcome to join us for about half an hour of quiet prayer – even if you have not done this sort of thing before. Ruth lives at 3, Sherwood Mews, Park Street (863268).

Wednesday December 13th at Ruth's

Wednesday January 17th at Ruth's

Wednesday January 24th at Ruth's

Grief and Loss Support Group Lunches

Our lunches are held at the White Horse, Bourne End at 12.30pm, usually on the third Wednesday in the month but on a Friday in December – Friday December 15th - and then the next one will be on Wednesday January 17th. Anyone who has been bereaved recently or a long time ago is very welcome to come. For further information and to arrange transport please contact Sylvia Banks on 871195.

The Leprosy Mission

Many thanks to all the members of All Saints for their contributions to the Leprosy Mission this year. It has been another good year and we have collected a total of £500.27 through the boxes and separate donations.

Please continue to give your support. The money we collect makes such a big difference to the mission's work and helps lepers overcome the disease and regain normal life.

Ann Thompson: tel 865127

Friendship Club Programme to end of December

Nov 28	Devotional – Jonathan Gordon and Project Table
Dec 5	Talk by Colin Lillicrap – Children at Risk in Asia
12	Christmas Fun Evening
19	Carol Service – Audrey Cox

A letter from Saint Martha's Church

October 20, 2017

Dear Malcolm

Please pass on to the congregation of All Saints our most grateful thanks for the generous donation towards our building project. We really appreciate the encouragement your gift has given to us and we sincerely hope that you will come to share an evening with us when we have finished.

God bless you

Rosemary Berdinner

Christmas Cards

Unfortunately due to arthritis our hands are now becoming severely affected and painful. Therefore we have decided this year not to write and send Church Christmas cards but to give the money that we would have spent to the Church funds. We would like to thank you all for your support and wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Fay and Eddie Cuthbert



New Admin

Hello, let me introduce myself. My name is Liz Terrett and I am the new Administration Assistant. I have carried out

a similar role at St Peter and St Paul in Tring and the plan is that I will set up an office within the church and will be available to assist with any admin tasks to make life a bit easier for Rachael and others for a couple of half days per week. We are hoping that fairly shortly I will have phone and email access so that I can be contacted if you require assistance. I look forward to meeting some of you in the next few weeks.



Tracy's Note

The new Church Year begins on 3rd December on **Advent Sunday** and the Travelling Crib will be sent out with the first family from the 10am service. There will also be **Messy Church** in the afternoon.

This year the children's **Nativity** presentation will be at the **All Age**

morning service on the **17th December**, when there will also be a baptism. In the afternoon that day we will have our **Candlelit Carol Service** at 4pm with the church lit mainly by candles. There will be a service new to All Saints' on **Thursday 21st December** at 5pm. It is called **Blue Christmas Service** and is a quieter, reflective service for people who find Christmas difficult – but everyone is welcome to come. See page 22.

On **Christmas Eve** our morning service of **Holy Communion at 10am** will be led by Revd Canon Gareth Powell who is Secretary of Conference. In the afternoon we have the **Crib Service at 4pm**.

Our **Christmas Day** service of Holy Communion will be at **10.30am**.

On the **last Sunday in December** (indeed the last day of 2017), being the fifth Sunday in the month, we have a morning service of **Holy Communion** (led by Revd Brian Tebbutt).

The first Sunday in 2018 is on **7th January** and we celebrate **The Epiphany** that day. There will be an **8am** service of **Holy Communion** and a **10am Morning Worship** service that day.

On **21st January**, which is the **Sunday in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**, Malcolm Lindo will be leading worship at the 10am service and there will be **Messy Church** in the afternoon.

The **Covenant Service** is on the last Sunday in January this year (**28th**) with a **Service of Wholeness and Healing** at 4pm in the afternoon.

There are a lot of special services over these two months so make a note of them in your diaries or on your calendars.

As I wish you all a Happy New Church Year, may this Advent be a time for us all to make ourselves ready to hear with fresh ears the story that we have heard so many times before, the story of God's great love for us unfolding in the birth of a helpless baby in Bethlehem, and may God's blessing and

peace be in your hearts and homes this
Christmastide and through the coming
year.

Tracy Robinson

Prayer

Dear Lord and Father,
We live in interesting times. We are
bombarded with images of despair and
deprivation, we are frustrated by our
seeming inability to change the world and
preoccupied with systems which seem to
fail us at every turn.

There is no emotion we feel now that has
not been felt long before our time by your
dear Son - impatience, frustration, misery,
and above all the sheer despair of
abandonment and isolation. He knew all
these, but, through it all, He knew that you
were with Him, as indeed you are with us.
Help us to take time, to stop for a while and
feel your presence, to listen for your voice
and, through this, learn your will and
purpose for each of us. This way lies
consolation, a clearer vision and the
courage to go on with joy feeling our hand
in yours.

Be still and know that I am God

Amen

Jill Southgate

The All Saints' Prayer

O God our heavenly Father, your Son Jesus
Christ prayed that we might be one as you
and he are one. Look with compassion on
your children of All Saints'. Teach us to put
aside all our prejudices and fears, to seek to
understand your purpose for us, and to use
together our different strengths and
insights. Grant us courage to follow your
leading and humility to learn from each
other, so that in unity and love we may
reflect your glory, both in worship and in
daily life. We ask this in the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ.

Written by Dr Jean Meyer and Allan Wilson
in 1973

A Christmas Acrostic Poem

Christ, Saviour, born for us, light of the
world.

All encompassing

Never dwindling

Dear Lord, bless us,

Light and love,

Everlasting. Shine in our hearts at
Christmas and for evermore.

Jo Herbert

For your information

Sunday Notices

Kate and Steve Spall 873470
email spalls@mac.com

St Peter's Pew Leaflet

Hilary Armstrong 878227
email

parishoffice@greatberkhamsted.org.uk

Church and Halls Booking

Jenny Ginn 866476

Junior Church

Contact Margaret Ingram 873251

Chuckles Toddler Goup

Charlotte Cramer 865499

Kate Spall 873470

Messy Church

Tracy Lerpiniere

tracylerp@btinternet.com

Cradle Roll

Joanna Herbert 870772

Safeguarding Officers

Revd Rachael Hawkins 866324

Ida Rance 865829

Friendship Club

Enid Rance 871187

Sandra Taylor 875906

Jan Bayliss 384280

Action for Children

Ida Rance 86582

Audrey Cox 866394

Children's Society

Jenny Hackworth 863990

Phakamisa

Marilyn Pain 879248

Christian Aid

Felicity White 866223

Posters and Notice Boards

Tracy Robinson 863559

Christina Billington 385566

Choir and organ

Ruth Treves Brown 863268

Tim French 870670

Catering

Gill Lumb 863885

Ceri Lindo 866714

Flowers

Madeleine Brownell and Friendship Club

862578

Stewardship Recorder

Keith Treves-Brown 863268

Treasurer

Michael Robinson 863559

Tape and MP3 Recordings of Services

Chris Lumb 863885

Church Cleaning Rota

Kate and Steve Spall 873470

Transport Co-ordinator

Vacant

Hospice of St Francis

Vacant

Health and Safety

Vacant

Web site

Kate Spall 873470

Michael Robinson 863559

<http://www.allsaintsberkhamsted.org.uk/>

Press Officer

Vacant

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01442 866324
rachael.hawkins@methodist.org.uk

Anglican Team Ministry

The Revd Canon Tim Pilkington 879739
The Revd Penny Nash 865217
The Revd Simon Vivian 864199

Supernumeraries

The Revd Barrie Allcott
The Revd David Bridge
The Revd Brian Tebbutt

Local Preachers

Audrey Cox
Brian Parsons *Emeritus*
Ruth Treves Brown
David Williamson
Malcolm Lindo *on trial*

Diocesan Lay Minister

Christina Billington

Readers

Richard Hackworth

Stewards

Ceri Lindo, Malcolm Lindo, Penny O'Neill
Tracy Robinson, Helen Temple

All Saints' Council

Secretary
Treasurer Michael Robinson

Anglican Methodist Association (Berkhamsted) Ltd.

Chairman Richard Hackworth
Company Secretary Steve Spall

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