

The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

As you read this Christmas will be over (Phew!) and we will be fast approaching Epiphany. The wise men were not all that wise. They went out not knowing where they were going; they even went to the wrong person by going to see Herod. But they were men of faith and they followed the star. The wise men were willing to move out, to leave all behind. They were not put off by threats of danger or by the mockery of others. They persevered until they came to the Christchild. Each of them had a personal need and something personal to offer.

The gifts the wise men brought were full of symbolism. Gold, as always, stands for wealth and success; it is a symbol of power and the ability to buy what you want. But gold cannot buy love! Gold cannot fill the human heart. The wise man knew this by experience and sought out the Christchild with all his heart.

Frankincense is a symbol of mystery and wonder. The wise man found the presence of God in the Christchild and came before him in worship.

Myrrh is used as a painkiller. Pain can often stop us doing what we are capable of. Physical and mental pain hinders us and in this we need help. Pain is hard to bear alone; so often the presence of a loving person gives us strength. The offering of myrrh was a sign that Jesus would share in our sufferings and "by his wounds we are healed". The wise man brought his pain and emptiness before the Christchild.

More than their gifts, the wise men came and gave themselves to Christ. The gifts were symbols of their lives, but it was their lives they brought before him. In this new year may we do the same.

(Some of the above material has been taken from 'Looking and Longing' by David Adam).

With all good wishes for this new year,

Andrew

Where does the money go?

We publish the Church Accounts each year and they are presented at the Annual Church Meeting, but I guess many people don't pore over them in great detail, or at all!

We are very fortunate in having very well supported events such as the Summer Fete and the Christmas Fayre and, of course, the regular giving of so many of our congregation. Our largest outlay is the Parish Share which is approximately £60,000. This amount pays for housing and the vicar's salary and pension as well as the support costs of the diocese and the wider Church of England. In Canford Cliffs and Sandbanks we are category A as it is assumed people who live here are the most able to pay, so our share will be more than a poorer parish in Poole or the more rural areas in the diocese. I realise this is not always the case because very often people are property rich, but do not necessarily have a large income on which to live. Since coming to live here it is incredible the preconceptions people have of the area. On my first visit to the Diocese one of the Bishops asked if I had come in my Rolls Royce!

Our running costs within the parish include the maintenance

of the church, hall and grounds. This year we had to have a tree survey and work to a number of trees, costing over £2,000. This coming year we will have the quinquennial inspection of the church building and again this may result in added cost. It is always difficult to talk about money, but as we start this new year if you are able to increase your giving to the church then we would be most grateful.

Andrew

What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold

because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine; and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him.

Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

Some modern tips for the Wise Men's journey

Suppose you are going abroad, to pay your respects to a newly born royal baby. But the country you visit is under foreign occupation, and you don't know where the baby is. What can you do to make sure you are successful?

When travelling abroad in foreign places, first think carefully about your transport – how many camels will you really need? How will you feed them on the way? And what about relying solely on the stars at night for navigation? Would a Satnav during the day help things along a bit?

When you arrive in the country, be sensitive to the political situation. It may be unwise to go straight to the authorities and ask them where their future king has just been born. This can make leaders uneasy, and can even get innocent people killed. Also, be aware of the country's attitude to different gods, especially if you have gone along intending to worship one in particular.

Don't worry if you are given only part of an address, say, only the name of the town where the baby may be. Go there, and trust that somehow you will feel 'led' to the right house.

Sadly, crime is common in many foreign cities, so if you are carrying expensive presents like gold or frankincense, it is best to keep them out of sight. A coat with large pockets, or even a loose cape, will work fine.

If any problems arise after you find the baby and pay your respects, don't hang about. Pay attention to that nightmare you had last night, and get out of the country before you are arrested. Be happy to take a different route home. After all, it is all under the same stars. Above all, be wise, and have a Happy New Year!

David Pickup

The Daily Service celebrates a big birthday

Ninety years ago this month BBC Radio broadcast for the first time a short Daily Service at 10.15 – in those days, the start of its daily output. It's half an hour later now, but it's still there, the longest running programme on the BBC, after News and Weather forecasts.

Its appearance in 1928 was, in fact, the result of a tireless and determined campaign by a lady in Bushey, Herts, Miss

Kathleen Cordeux. For two years she had campaigned for a short Christian service each morning 'for the sick and house-bound' – 'just some sacred music, a hymn, a Bible reading and prayer'. Through the letters column in the Radio Times, and then by bombarding the director-general of the BBC, John Reith, after two years she got her way – at first as an 'experiment', to test the demand. The response from listeners was immediate and enthusiastic and 90 years later, I think even she would be surprised to find that it is still there every day on Radio 4. And it still follows her proposed content: sacred music, a hymn, a Bible reading and a prayer.

David Winter

Thomas Hardy – looking back 90 years

Poet and novelist Thomas Hardy died 90 years ago this month, on 11th January 1928. He is probably best known for the Wessex novels, named after one of the kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon Britain and set largely in the Dorset area, where he was born and where he died. But his real talent was as a poet.

Hardy's long career – he was born in 1840 – spanned the Victorian and modern eras. He is generally regarded as pessimistic and fatalistic, although in his youth he had wanted to be a parson, and his biblical knowledge, expressed in both his poetry and his novels, was exceptional. Although generally regarded as an agnostic, he never stopped attending Anglican church and taking Holy Communion.



His novels, though very readable, were marred by an excessive use of coincidence, but some of his poetry was brilliant, employing the music of language to the full, and often revealed an underlying hope – or at least the desire for it. In *The Darkling* Thrush he writes of “some blessed Hope, whereof he knew / And I was unaware”, and in *The Oxen* he concludes: “I should go with him in the gloom, / Hoping it might be so.”

When Hardy died, his ashes were deposited in the Poets’ Corner of Westminster Abbey. His heart was interred in the graveyard at Stinsford Church where his parents, grandparents, and his first wife were buried.

Tim Lenton

TO MAKE YOU SMILE.....

Incentive to succeed - An old gentleman was on the operating table awaiting surgery. He had insisted that his son, a renowned surgeon, perform the operation. As he was about to get the anaesthesia, he asked to speak to his son, to encourage him. 'Don't be nervous, do your best and just remember, if it doesn't go well, and something happens to me, your mother is going to come and live with you and your wife.'

This curious business of raising children - You spend the first two years of their life teaching them to walk and talk. Then you spend the next sixteen telling them to sit down and shut up!

A GREENER CAPITAL



Churches across London are making their neighbourhood a greener, cleaner and more bee-friendly place, as part of a new project supported by the Mayor of London.

The Conservation Foundation's Trees for Sacred Spaces project is enabling London churches to plant trees that support bees and other pollinators as part of the Mayor's ambition to make London one of the greenest cities in the world. The tree plantings also offer an opportunity for churches to organise events and ceremonies that involve members of other faiths in their parishes to celebrate and help to enhance the environments that people of all faiths and no faith share.

Late last year The Conservation Foundation delivered over 300 trees to 53 sites across London. Whilst not all churches have suitable spaces, those with nowhere to plant a tree are donating theirs to a school or community garden within their parish, helping to increase London's tree canopy cover and support bees and other wildlife to thrive in London.

Churches were offered a choice from 12 different species: hawthorn, bird cherry, wild cherry, whitebeam, crab apple, rowan, lime, tulip tree, Italian cypress, black mulberry, strawberry tree and yew. Of these, rowan, wild cherry and mulberry are the most in demand. All improve air quality and also support bees by providing pollen, nectar or resin.

The project is supported by the diocesan bishops. Launching Trees for Sacred Spaces in February shortly before his retirement, The Rt Revd Richard Chartres, former Bishop of London, said, "It gives me great pleasure that one of the

final projects I will launch as Bishop of London will offer our churches the opportunity to plant more trees in their areas, contributing to local air quality as well as providing places of peace and beauty for generations to come."

The Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Revd Christopher Chessun, is equally enthusiastic. He explains, "The Mayor of London's tree planting initiative is an innovative way of contributing to the life of London's communities by improving the city's air quality and also brightening its public spaces.

David Shreeve, director of The Conservation Foundation, says, "A fifth of the capital is already covered by trees but some parts of London are short of greenery. Churches can play an important role in helping to make these areas look and feel better by planting one of the trees. All the trees available will be bee-friendly and therefore as well as benefiting London's landscape and atmosphere they will also be supporting the capital's pollinators." More info at: www.conservationfoundation.co.uk/trees.

Good to Remember

At the start of another year it is good to remember "*The Gate of the Year*" by Minnie Louise Hoskins. King George VI quoted it in his Christmas message to the nation and it is still as reassuringly valid today.

*"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
'Give me light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'
And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your
hand in the hand of God. That shall be to you better than
light and safer than a known way."*



CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

Wed 3 10.30 am
 Thurs 4 10.00 am
 Fri 5 10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
 Parish Art Group
Coffee Morning in hall

EPIPHANY

Sun 7 8.00 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

Holy Communion
 Parish Communion
 Evening Prayer

Wed 10 10.30 am
 Fri 12 10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
 Baby Group *in hall*

EPIPHANY 2

Sun 14 8.00 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

Holy Communion
 Matins *(Sunday Club in hall)*
 Evening Prayer

Wed 17 10.30 am
 Thurs 18 10.00 am
 Fri 19 10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
 Parish Art Group
Coffee Morning in hall

EPIPHANY 3

Sun 21 8.00 am
 9.30 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

Holy Communion
 Family Service
 Parish Communion
 Choral Evensong

Tues 23 10.00 am
 Wed 24 10.30 am
 Thurs 25 3.30 pm
 Fri 26 10.30 am

Craft Group
 Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
 Magazine collation
 Baby Group *in hall*

PRESENTATION OF CHRIST

Sun	28	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Matins (<i>Sunday Club in hall</i>)
		6.00 pm	Evening Prayer
Wed	31	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

FEBRUARY

Thurs	1	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
Fri	2	10.30 am	<i>Coffee Morning in hall</i>

2nd Sunday before Lent

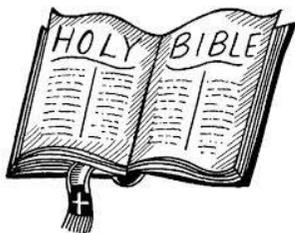
Sun	4	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Parish Communion and Baptism
		6.00 pm	Evening Prayer

ALL IN THE MONTH OF JANUARY

150 years ago, on 8th Jan 1868 that Sir Frank Dyson, British Astronomer Royal (1910-33), was born. His observations during the 1919 solar eclipse helped support Einstein's theory of general relativity. He also introduced the Greenwich time signal 'pips'.

125 years ago, on 14th - 16th Jan 1893 that the Independent Labour Party was founded in the UK. It was led by Keir Hardie and was a precursor to the Labour Party (founded 1900).

100 years ago, from Jan 1918 to Dec 1920 that the 1918 'flu pandemic took place. About 500 million people were infected and 50 – 100 million people died (5% of the global population).



SUNDAY READINGS **IN JANUARY**

Sunday 7th January - Epiphany

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 60.1-6

Isaiah speaks of a glorious day when people will come to the Lord from far and wide, bringing their gifts and their worship.

NEW TESTAMENT: Ephesians 3.1-12

Paul reveals that the riches of Christ are for Gentiles as well as Jews.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2.1-12

In the days of Herod, Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Wise men come enquiring about the King of the Jews. Herod is worried.

Sunday 14th January - Epiphany 2

OLD TESTAMENT: 1 Samuel 3.1-20

God reveals himself to Samuel through the medium of a dream and its interpretation by Eli.

NEW TESTAMENT: John 1.43-end

Jesus calls his first group of disciples and it is clear that these men are instantly aware of Jesus' identity from their first moment of contact with him.

Sunday 21st January - Epiphany 3

OLD TESTAMENT: Genesis 14.17-20

Abram rescues his relative Lot and meets with Melchizedek, King of Salem, who blesses him.

NEW TESTAMENT: Revelation 19.6-10

Hallelujah! St. John the Divine describes the wedding of the Lamb.

GOSPEL: John 2.1-11

The wedding feast at Cana where Jesus changes water to wine.

Sunday 28th January - The Presentation of Christ

OLD TESTAMENT: Malachi 3.1-5

Malachi establishes the imminence of God's coming, an event which no man will be able to resist. His message is one of tense expectation.

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 2.22-40

Jesus' unique identity and importance are confirmed by the testimony of Simeon and Anna.

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

A BIG thank you to everyone who helped to make the Christmas Fayre such a success. We raised just over £2,000 which was wonderful. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard on the refreshments and decorating the hall and thank you to the stallholders and the people who donated items for the stalls and the raffle. A big thank you too to Ewa who gave up her morning to play the piano which was much appreciated by everyone.





THE NAMING OF JESUS

It is Matthew and Luke who tell the story of how the angel instructed that Mary's baby was to be named Jesus. The Church recalls the naming of Jesus on 1st January - eight days after 25th December (by the Jewish way of reckoning days). For in Jewish tradition, the male babies were circumcised and named on their eighth day of life.

The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, 'Yehosua', or Joshua. Or there is the Hebrew-Aramaic form, 'Yesua'. In Greek, it became 'Ἰησοῦς' (Iēsoûs), and in Latin it became 'Iesus'. The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh delivers' or 'Yahweh rescues', or 'Yahweh is salvation'. No wonder the angel Gabriel told Mary to name her baby Jesus: "*because he will save his people from their sins*".

For early Christians, the name of Jesus held a special significance. In Jewish tradition, names expressed aspects of personality. Jesus' name permeated his ministry, and it does so today: we are baptised in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38), we are justified through the name of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11); and God the Father has given Jesus a name above all others (Philippians 2:9). All Christian prayer is through '*Jesus Christ our Lord*', and it is '*at the name of Jesus*' that one day every knee shall bow.



God's Touching Gift

God's gift wrapped, swaddling tight, against cold night,
whose black is— all of a sudden— pierced with singing.

Arms that would one day reach out
to encompass the whole, cold world
as it watched, waiting, baiting him
in his very act of sacrificial giving,
are pinioned in that swaddling.

Mollycoddling mother rocks now her child to sleep,
hay warm, and marvels at his perfect form;
God's tiny hands curling, clutching her cold fingers.
This moment lingers long— a memory to save, recall,
echoing in all the touching times;
as the man grown from this child
reaches out to leper, outcast, rich and poor,
offering them God's gift.

Wendy Fellingham



Simeon Stylites - one of the weirder saints!

Quite frankly, this hermit was about as weird as they come. But he loved God, and God blessed him, strange though he was. So perhaps Simeon Stylites (390 – 459) should be the patron saint of all REALLY eccentric people.

Simeon was the son of a shepherd on the Syrian border of Cilicia. He joined a monastery near Antioch, where he practised mortifications and penances that nearly killed him. When the abbot dismissed him in disgust as crazy, Simeon moved on to Telanissos (nowadays Dair Sem'an) and spent his first Lent there in a total fast. He was found unconscious on Easter Day. After three years in that monastery he felt life was too easy, and moved himself to the top of the nearby mountain, where he chained himself to a rock. He began to be talked about, and more and more people came to see him.

Simeon did not want their company, and so planned his escape: to the top of a pillar. For the next four years he lived on top of a pillar that was nine feet high. More people came by, and so Simeon in desperation added to his pillar, until it grew to be 18 feet high. Still people came to see him, and so three years later, Simeon built himself a real skyscraper – a pillar 33 feet high, from the top of which he enjoyed 10 years of comparative solitude.

Still people came to see him – both Christians and pagans, and so Simeon decided to somehow build a pillar that was 60 feet high and six feet wide. Here he found peace and quiet, and so here he lived for the last 20 years of his life. People still came to see him, and tried to catch the 'sacred' lice that fell off his body. They enjoyed his twice daily exhortations to everyone below. Even some emperors came by for a look – Theodosius, Leo and Marcian.

A scholar has written of Simeon: "His preaching was practical, kindly, and free from fanaticism. ... In an age of licentiousness and luxury he gave unique and abiding witness to the need for penance and prayer; his way of life provided a spectacle at once challenging, repulsive and awesome."

Simeon finally died and was buried at Antioch. Perhaps he would have enjoyed the chance to take the plinth at Trafalgar Square!

In praise of the Remnant

I hadn't seen her for 30 years, when she had been a member of the Church Youth Club. Now, as an adult, she was one of a faithful few who were keeping the same church going. Thinking I would pay her an encouraging compliment, I said she was part of the Remnant. When her face fell, I realised that, for most people, 'remnant' is how you describe leftover pieces of material which fabric departments have no use for and sell at bargain prices.

But in the Bible, the 'Remnant' is a term of great honour. It describes a dedicated minority who remained loyal to God, when others were falling away. God relied on them to represent Him, and He honoured their commitment. It underlies the story of Noah, when only a few were saved from the Flood. It recurred when Lot escaped from the destruction of Sodom, and again when Elijah grumpily complained that he alone remained faithful, although he was one of a minority of 7,000 loyal servants of God.

The prophets taught that, despite the apostasy of the majority, God would keep hold of a minority; special messengers would confirm that His purposes could not be

thwarted. In the New Testament, John the Baptist took up that role, and preached the uncompromising message that repentance is required if people mean business with God – the right pedigree or great wealth is meaningless to the Almighty.

God doesn't need large numbers to fulfil His purposes. Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven is like a tiny bit of yeast which transforms a large quantity of flour to produce bread. What does that say to the 21st Century, when the success of a movement is measured by the number of its adherents?

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit”, says the Lord Almighty.

The Ven. John Barton

STITCHES OF HOPE

It is about nine months since I started to help Jenny Stearn with the collection of knitting and despatch of same to the charity Hope International.



I have been absolutely amazed at the marvellous knitting that I have seen - wonderful, colourful blankets of various sizes and patterns, the squares being knitted at one place and then put together and edged in another, such skills and quite a production line. Also sweaters and cardigans to fit babies to teenagers in a variety of colours and pattern designs.

These are so gratefully welcomed at the charity who then send them out to orphanages in eastern Europe.

Not everyone who knits are church members, so if any of you have friends who would like to help please do give them my name. Wool can be supplied for those who do not want to buy it for themselves.

I would like to thank Jenny for the many years that she has been helping the charity and I'm sure that we all wish her good health in 2018 and beyond.

Finally, thank you all so much and wishing you a happy, healthy New Year.

Tessa Yeoman



FROM THE REGISTERS

Funeral

21st December Richard David Atkin (56)

ALTAR FLOWERS

Sunday 7 th January	The Guild
Sunday 14 th January	The Guild
Sunday 21 st January	Wendy Bales
Sunday 28 th January	Wendy Bales

MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the February edition of the
Church Magazine is

Wednesday 17th January 2018