

Curate's Corner

It feels rather odd to be writing of January – the other side of the Christmas festivities – before we're even through Advent. Christmas – more, perhaps than other festivals – seems like a wall; something which you just can't seem to see past, or round, or over to the other side. Or a mountain, blocking our view of what is to come until you're atop of it.

Of course, this isn't entirely unreasonable! In fact, if anything is inappropriate it's the unseemly haste in which Christmas is forgotten in the secular world – all that anticipation, the throwing up of the decorations in shops and stores, the Christmas adverts and songs and then... Blue Monday? The most depressing day of the year? Of course, this is a pseudoscience above anything else; Blue Monday was invented by a holiday company to convince us all to go away in the later part of January.

I say secular, but I wonder whether we too are a bit hasty to let go of Christmas. Traditionally, of course, the Christmas season in church takes in Epiphany and keeps on going until Candlemas, taking us right up into February. But Christmas, or at least, the celebration of Christ's incarnation should be with us all the year round. It really should be Christmas, in a sense (as the song puts it), every day. Because that birth, in Bethlehem, of the Christ Child started a trajectory which includes you now. A trajectory that is traced right through the life of Jesus, right through his passion, death and resurrection, right through his ascension – right through to each of us every day.

Christianity is not a religion which is ungrounded; it's not based on a vision, or simply on a story. It's founded on much stronger rock than these; the real life and death of God incarnate. This is the true epiphany; the epiphany of our hearts. That God sent his only-begotten Son, to be our saviour, to show us love. Last week I preached about Love in relation to John the Baptist's call, following Isaiah, to 'prepare the way of the Lord', I suggested we could take this as a direction to prepare Love in our hearts.

Now, with the celebration of that love behind us, let us nonetheless put it before us. We need to respond to Christmas in a much more real way than the secular world. We must change our hearts, and bear this love into the world around us, even as the world forgets the joy it so fleetingly celebrated.

Christmas, in other words, is not just for Christmas.

Blessings in the New Year,

Tom



A Fisherman's Prayer

*God grant that I may live to fish
Until my dying day
And when it comes my turn to cast
I then must humbly pray
When in the Lord's safe landing net
I'm peacefully asleep
That in his mercy I be judged
As good enough to keep.
Anon*

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

A BIG thank you to everyone who helped to make the Christmas Fayre such a success. We raised just over £2,200 which was wonderful. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard on the refreshments and Jan and Henry for decorating the hall. Thanks also go to the stallholders and the people who donated items for the stalls and the raffle and to the many people who turned up on the day to support us. Many thanks, once again, to Ewa who gave up her morning to play the piano which was much appreciated by everyone.



THE BOURNEMOUTH MALE VOICE CHOIR

The choir was formed over a hundred years ago when the Bournemouth Labour and Springbourne Male voice choirs amalgamated to create The Bournemouth Male Voice Choir, and their first concert took place on the steps of the Bournemouth Town Hall. I think it was in June 2012 that we repeated history, and celebrated our centenary with a concert on the same steps as our predecessors had sung all those years ago.

Much has changed in the intervening period as has the type of music sung by the choir over those years. Under our current musical director Mark Burstow, we try to combine the traditional singing of a male voice choir with more modern compositions including songs from musical shows, and current "hits" sung by well known entertainers. Sadly, there are very few modern composers today this side of the Atlantic who are interested in music for male voice choirs, and we are forced to look to America and Canada for modern compositions.

Under Mark's inspired and gifted leadership, the choir has performed at International competitions including the Bangor convention in Northern Ireland where it won two first prizes, one in the unaccompanied section, and the other in sacred music. Last year in the Brighton competition, the choir won first prize against stiff opposition. Locally, we have performed at The Lighthouse Theatre, and in a service of 9 lessons and carols at Christchurch Priory and many local appearances to raise money for charitable causes.

At the present time the choir numbers 48 choristers, but are always pleased to welcome anyone who would like to join, particularly if you have a tenor voice!

Nigel Yeoman

Wise Men Still Seek Him

'A cold coming we had of it. Just the worst time of the year. For a journey and such a long journey.' ('Journey of the Magi', T.S. Eliot).

In this poem, T.S. Eliot imagines the journey of the Magi to worship Jesus, as told in Matthew 2. This story is at the heart of our celebration of Epiphany, as we remember the astrologers from the East following a star to find the baby: *'Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star when it rose and have come to worship Him.'* (Matthew 2:1,2).

The Magi provide a powerful picture of the journey we make in searching for God in our lives. Like them, it requires time and effort (they travelled for months) and will not always be easy! As they followed the star, so we are called to pursue God's light in our lives.

What does this say to us at the beginning of a New Year? Are we ready to go deeper in our relationship with God? Are we looking for new ways to use our time, treasure and talents for Him? It is a great time to offer these things to Him, and like the Magi, commit ourselves to pursue them. His light, through prayer, worship and his Word, will be our guide on the way.

T.S. Eliot used the imagined journey of the magi to reflect on his own spiritual journey. It reveals the pain and doubts he experienced on his long and troubled journey to find the light of Christ. He describes finding Christ as a *'hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death'*. Are we prepared to make this journey for ourselves?

The Rev'd Paul Hardingham

St. Simeon Stylites - One of the weirder saints! (5th January)

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!

'That they be One'

'My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (John 17:20,21).

The basis of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is Jesus' prayer for the unity of the Church. We need to pray for greater unity across the denominations, as this will help people to believe in Jesus for themselves.

Paul reminds us that while we are *'one body and one Spirit'* (Eph 4:4), we have to strive for unity: *'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.'* (Ephesians 4:3). What does this mean practically? *Love Christians across boundaries:* What opportunities do we have to build relationships with Christians in other churches, recognising all we share in our faith in Christ? As Paul says; *'Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.'* (Eph 4:2).

Serve Christian across boundaries: How can we show love for other Christians or take opportunities to partner

together? Despite the fundamental barriers that separate us, if we can demonstrate God's love together, those around see that we really are Christians. This brings glory to God!

'How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!..there the Lord bestows his blessing' (Ps 133:1,3). The picture of oil running down Aaron's beard is messy! Striving towards unity is worth the messiness, as it results in blessing.

'The Lord asks us for unity; our world, torn apart by all too many divisions that affect the most vulnerable, begs for unity' (Pope Francis).

The week of Prayer for Christian Unity runs from 18th - 26th January.

The Rev'd Paul Hardingham

VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS

Christmas is a good time to say 'thank you' and we would like to thank all those of you who support the church regularly throughout the year with Gift Aided donations by means of Standing Orders and/or Envelopes. Your generous contributions are highly appreciated and extremely valuable not only to enable us to provide all the services required to keep the church running but also to maintain the general fabric of the building.



CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

Wed 2 10.30 am
 Thurs 3 10.00 am
 Fri 4 10.30 am

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

EPIPHANY

Sun 6 8.00 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

Holy Communion
 Parish Communion
 Evening Prayer

Wed 9 10.30 am
 Fri 11 9.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*
 Baby Group

EPIPHANY 2

Sun 13 8.00 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

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

Wed 16 10.30 am
 Thurs 17 10.00 am
 Fri 18 10.30 am

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

EPIPHANY 3

Sun 20 8.00 am
 9.30 am
 10.30 am
 6.00 pm

Holy Communion
 Family Service
 Parish Communion
 Choral Evensong

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|------|------------------|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Tues | 22 nd | 10.00 am | Craft Group <i>(in hall)</i> |
| Wed | 23 rd | 10.30 am | Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i> |
| Fri | 25 th | 9.30 am | Baby Group |
| Sat | 26 th | 7.00 pm | Bournemouth Male Voice Choir Concert in church |

EPIPHANY 4

| | | | |
|-------|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun | 27 th | 8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion Matins <i>(Sunday Club in hall)</i> Evening Prayer |
| Wed | 30 th | 10.30 am | Holy Communion <i>(at St. Nicolas)</i> |
| Thurs | 31 st | 10.00 am | Parish Art Group |

FEBRUARY

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|-----|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Fri | 1 st | 10.30 am | <i>Coffee Morning in hall</i> |
|-----|-----------------|----------|--------------------------------------|

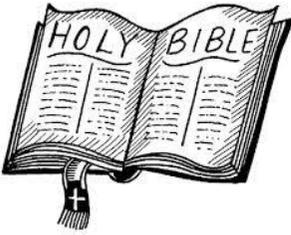
CANDLEMAS

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|-----|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun | 3 rd | 8.00 am 10.30 am 6.00 pm | Holy Communion Parish Communion <i>with the Rev'd Canon Jeremy Oakes</i> Evening Prayer |
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ADVANCE NOTICE:

Sunday 17th February, 6.00 pm, Service of the Sea with the Royal Motor Yacht Club. Our preacher will be the Rt. Rev'd Karen Gorham, Bishop of Sherborne.





SUNDAY READINGS **IN DECEMBER**

Sunday 6th January - The Epiphany

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 60.1-6

The new Jerusalem is the nucleus of a family made up of all nations who will come together and draw from Jerusalem her light and sustenance.

NEW TESTAMENT: Ephesians 3.1-12

Paul emphasises the accessibility of God's promise to the gentile community through his own special calling as apostle.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2.1-12

The Magi deliver their gifts to the baby Jesus and return home by another route as they had been warned in a dream not to return to King Herod.

Sunday 13th January – Epiphany 2

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 43.1-7

God promises to rescue his people, many of whom are in exile. God will bring his people home.

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 3.15-17, 21-22

John the Baptist tells the people of the one who is to come who will baptise with the Holy Spirit and with fire and will judge the people.

Sunday 20th January – Epiphany 3

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 62.1-5

The new Jerusalem will be glorious in the eyes of the world and to God when he comes to establish his kingdom.

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 Corinthians 12.1-11

Paul speaks of God's will to distribute, through his Spirit, the various gifts that will enable his living body, the Church, to flourish and serve him.

GOSPEL: John 2.1-11

Jesus' first miracle in the presence of his mother and the disciples is a demonstration of God at work in the ministry of Jesus.

Sunday 27th January – Epiphany 4

OLD TESTAMENT: Nehemiah 8.1-10

Ezra, the priest, reads the Book of Law to the Israelites who wept as they listened. Nehemiah tells them the day is sacred and joyous and not to grieve.

NEW TESTAMENT: Luke 4.14-21

In a sudden, unexpected and dramatic demonstration of God's power, Saul, the persecutor of Christians, is transformed into Paul, apostle to the Gentiles.

Sunday 3rd February – Candlemas

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: Hebrews 2.14-end

By his death, Christ liberates us from the power of death and enables us to choose life. Christ enables us to reject temptation with him and thereby live.

GOSPEL: Luke 2.22-40

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

In February General Synod is going to debate a report on Care of the Clergy. The draft document sets out some ways of changing the culture of the Church to enable the care and well-being of its clergy to be more fully addressed. That is the background to this article by Canon David Winter.

Caring for the Vicar and Curate

The Church of England is looking into ways of giving more support to vicars. You may think here's a nice life: house provided, regular salary, job security – and only one day's work a week! But from my own personal experience I can assure you it's not like that.

In my working life I've had four jobs: teacher, then journalist, then BBC producer and finally vicar. The last was by some distance the most satisfying and rewarding, but also by far the most demanding. Your home is also the office seven days a week. It's true Sunday is the 'public' bit of your work, but while you may be free to pick up the kids from school forget about cosy evenings with the family. The bit of the vicar's work that is public is on Sundays, true. But the really defining part of the job is largely unseen and takes place all through the week.

It was funny coming from an ordinary job to parish ministry. Previously, I had known what I was expected to do, the hours I was required to work and to whom I was answerable. Well vicars are technically 'self-employed', though they are licensed by the bishop and paid by the Church Commissioners. In practice, their work is determined by the local church – its needs, potential, aspirations. The churchwardens and the Parochial Church Council also help to shape the work-load. If all that sounds a bit confusing, yes, it is. Possibly the Church's current research may look into that.

What won't change, I'm sure, is the priestly vocation. It is not a job, even if I've used the word, but a vocation – like nursing, teaching or care-work. It is always hopeless to treat a vocation as a job! Mind you, that is all the more reason for those who shape the work patterns of those 'called' with sensitivity and care. Clergy burn-out is not unknown, and nor is depression which stems from a feeling of failure. So, don't only just *pray* for the vicar. *Show* him or her how much you value them and, where possible, share their burden.

An Incredible Star

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome....

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,
And strange the plain things are,
The earth is enough and the air is enough
For our wonder and our way;
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings,
And our peace is put in impossible things
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings
Round an incredible star.

(From *The House of Christmas*, by G K Chesterton)

The Rectory
St James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

Your New Year resolution of getting up at 4am and devoting the first four hours every day to prayer and meditation does you credit – although I am not entirely certain you will get past the first week. I, too, make an annual resolution; this year it is to become more tolerant of my parishioners.

I intend to become more tolerant of our deputy organist Mrs Ffrench. If we have a four-verse hymn, the dear lady is almost guaranteed either to play three or five verses. If the former, I always have to be prepared to start singing the final verse myself, while the congregation tags along several words behind and our organist gamely, and entirely unsuccessfully, tries to find out where we are up to; if the latter, then we all meekly sing the final verse a second time.

I intend to become more tolerant of our team who assemble the parish magazine. Copies are generally put together with the pages in a random order, generally with one sheet upside down. One month, we will have 50 copies too few and those who fail to receive one behave as though their lives will be forever after entirely ruined, and the next month, we will have 50 copies too many, whereupon people complain about the wanton destruction of the Amazonian rainforest.

I will be more tolerant of Lady Trotter who always arrives for our Sunday 8am Service 10 minutes late. While we are piously at prayer, she slams the north door, shakes her umbrella over the floor, wishes the sidesman a cheery

"good morning", drops her Service books, clumps up the aisle in her steel tipped brogues, removes her mackintosh, fumbles for a kneeler and volubly asks the entire congregation where we are up to in the Service. She then gives me a nod to tell me that I may proceed with divine worship.

I intend to be more tolerant of my neighbour, an aggressive atheist who invariably decides that Mattins is the ideal time to use his chainsaw in the garden, that the annual garden fete is the right day for a bonfire and who sends me a monthly rant of several pages, taking issue with my letter in the magazine.

I intend to ... on reflection, perhaps I may decide on an alternative resolution for the New Year.

Your loving uncle,
Eustace

THE CHURCH CRAFT *GROUP*

Well, we have now come to the end of another year as a church craft group and I wanted to say a huge thank you to everyone who attends each month and works so hard making everything for the Summer and Christmas stalls. It has been a very successful year, raising over £600 for church funds. It is a welcoming, enthusiastic and fun group of people who have been willing to turn their hands to anything I've thrown at them and I'm very grateful to them for that. We start again on Tuesday, January 22nd and anyone is welcome to come along and join us.
Joanne O'Brien



Celebrating Thenadays

'Auld Lang Syne' was sung over the New Year, especially in Scotland. It should, we are told, 'never be forgotten'. But what is it?

The words actually mean something like 'long time ago' and it is the 'acquaintances' of long ago that we should not forget. In other words, and somewhat to contradict the usual New Year greetings, it calls us to look back. The past, it says, is precious, as are the people who have been part of it for us.

At my age people often use the word 'nowadays'. Usually negatively – 'nowadays there's nothing good on the TV' or 'nowadays people never say thank you'. It's a mind-set that is shaped by the memory of a golden age that probably never existed. Yet there is a truth in there somewhere. If we find 'nowadays' unsettling, why not remember 'Thenadays'? Our past is who we are. Its people have shaped our lives. There is nothing wrong sometimes in looking back and remembering. As the song says, it should be 'brought to mind' – the 'old acquaintances' of our lives.

For me, for instance, that is my father taking me as a six-year-old to watch the steam trains go by. It's my grandparents in their Welsh village. It's old friends and colleagues, some from as long as 70 years ago, with all the laughter and tears we shared. And it's not just happy things like my own family but also the sad loss of loved ones and the feeling of helpless deprivation that follows. All of this is part of my 'Thenadays'.

As we wish people a 'Happy New Year' it's not a bad idea to pick up that strange Scots saying and invite them not to forget a human heritage which is ours – people, events,

experience. 'Auld Lang Syne' is the totality of our lives as we have lived them. Looking back is often the best way of looking forward...

The Rev'd Canon David Winter

TO MAKE YOU SMILE

Morning Tea

A vicar in a small country church was looking forward to an important visit from his bishop, which would involve the bishop staying overnight at the vicarage after the service. His young son became very excited, as he had never spoken to a bishop before.

The vicar decided that his young son should be allowed to knock on the bishop's door in the morning and take him in his morning tea. His father gave him instructions: "First, knock on the door of the bishop's room and then say loud and clear: "It's the boy, my Lord, it's time to get up."

The young son was very excited and rehearsed his lines, repeating them over and over. Finally, the bishop came and spent the night. Next morning the young lad went to the door and knocked. He cried loudly: "It's the Lord, my boy, and your time is up!"

FROM THE REGISTERS

There are no entries for the Registers this month.

ALTAR FLOWERS

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Sunday 6 th January | The Guild |
| Sunday 13 th January | The Guild |
| Sunday 20 th January | Wendy Bales |
| Sunday 27 th January | Wendy Bales |



MAGAZINE DEADLINE

The deadline for the February edition of the
Church Magazine is
Friday 18th January