

# The Vicar Writes...

Dear Friends

As you read this you will no doubt have taken down your Christmas decorations for another year. We will have heard the Christmas story told again and it is interesting to think that we interpret all that through nearly two thousand years of theology and church life.

But Mary and Joseph had none of that. They knew their baby was special in some way. The visits of the shepherds and wise men pointed to that, but it wasn't very clear. They had been told to name him Jesus. It meant Saviour, but it was a common name. Even being told that he would save people from their sins wasn't very explicit, seen from where they were.

It was made harder by other events. Mary and Joseph were not in control of their lives. They had been compelled to go to Bethlehem for a census, on Roman orders. Then, King Herod's soldiers got in the way, and they had to run for safety to Egypt as refugees. Looking at later events, I am sure it was a blessing that they didn't know in detail what life held for them all, especially about the baby's call to preach and die.

There are times when we wish we knew more about the future. Moments when we would like to feel in better control of life, but we can't. Life is not like that. Each day we walk into the unknown as Mary and Joseph did and, like them, we find strength for that one day. We have one advantage though, that they did not have. We do know

who Jesus is, and what he has done. We have the confidence of walking into each day with him.

With all good wishes and a happy new year,  
Andrew

## **CHRISTMAS FAYRE**

A BIG thank you to everyone who helped to make the Christmas Fayre such a success. We raised just over £2,228 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 and David who gave up their morning to provide us with musical accompaniment which was much appreciated by everyone.



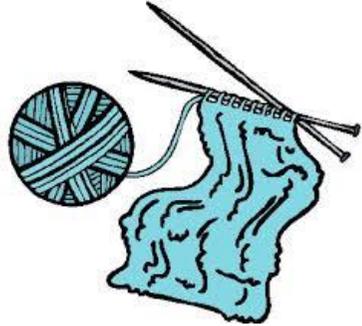
On behalf of the church I would like to thank Anna for organising and coordinating this event. If you want something done always ask a busy person!

Andrew

## **STITCHES OF HOPE**

Again this year I have been able to send several bags of garments and blankets to the Charity of Hope. The blankets are wonderful squares of magnificent colours, sewn together and edged most beautifully, anyone receiving one of these would be absolutely delighted, not only are they wonderfully warm they will also make a cheerful addition to any home.

The jumpers and cardigans are beautifully knitted , some with matching hats, of varying sizes from babies to teenagers, also some booties and mittens for the babies. Such a delight and a blessing for children who have so little.



In March I had a small display in the Church room after service to show members of the congregation some of the handiwork. All these were much admired, I think some people were even amazed at the quality. I had hoped that it would encourage a few more knitters but so far no luck. If anyone would like to make a few garments or squares please do get in touch and I can give them some wool, it would be so helpful.

So, a big thank you to all who have knitted, and to those who contributed to the cost of the wool and the postage. Also one or two people have not been well during the year and I send them my best wishes for speedy recoveries.

My best wishes for a Happy Christmas and healthy New Year.

Tessa Yeoman

## **Mary Slessor of Calabar (11<sup>th</sup> January)**

Courage, vision and leadership are found in the most unlikely of places.

Mary Slessor was born in December 1848 into a wretchedly poor family. Her father was an alcoholic who lost his job as a shoemaker. Mary was the second of seven children, and in 1859 they moved from Aberdeen into the fetid slums of Dundee. Her father and mother worked in the mills, and Mary joined them there when she turned 11.

When Mary's father and both brothers died of pneumonia, Mary's mother struggled on to keep Mary and her two sisters alive. By the time Mary was 14 she was doing a 12-hour day as a jute maker.

But life was not all drudgery. Mary's mother was a devout Christian who read the family Bible to her daughters, and also the *Missionary Record*, a monthly publication from the United Presbyterian Church. The stories of the missionaries captivated Mary. When she heard that David Livingstone, the great missionary explorer, had died, she decided that she would follow in his footsteps. She wanted to devote her life to taking the gospel to Africa. She was 25.

In August 1876 the Presbyterians sent her out to Calabar, Nigeria, an area where no European had ever yet set foot. With her red hair and blue eyes, Mary grabbed attention wherever she went, but despite recurring illness and constant danger, Mary settled happily among the tribes. She learned their traditions, quickly becoming fluent in their language, Efik. Soon she won the confidence of their tribal leaders. She taught their children and was soon determined to put an end to some of their barbaric

practises, such as the killing of twins (whom they thought were evil).

Over the years Mary put an end to many witchcraft practises, and she adopted every twin child she found abandoned. And she talked endlessly about Jesus Christ, the passion of her life.

Mary was tough – she made long trips through the jungles and took canoes up remote rivers. When her shoes gave out, she went barefoot. Her great passion was to go to 'the regions beyond' with the Gospel. She thrived in places and among people who would have terrified most women in her day.

It has been written of her: 'Practically singlehanded she tamed and transformed three pagan communities in succession. It is a question if the career of any other woman missionary has been marked by so many strange adventures, daring feats, signal providences, and wonderful achievements.'" (Dr Robert H. Glover, *The Progress of World-Wide Missions*.)

When in 1901 Southern Nigeria became a British Protectorate, Mary was appointed the first ever female Magistrate in the British Empire. She became a skilful diplomatic emissary.

She was known for saying: "It is not Mary Slessor, but God and our united prayers that have brought the blessings to Calabar. Christ shall have all the honour and glory for the multitudes saved."

When she finally died of fever in January 1915 the native Christian girls and women wept bitterly: "Our mother is dead. Everybody's mother has left us."

Mary Slessor once wrote to a friend who had long prayed for her: "I have always said that I have no idea how or why God has carried me over so many funny and hard places, and made these hordes of people submit to me, or why the Government should have given me the privilege of a Magistrate among them, except in answer to prayer made at home for me. It is all beyond my comprehension."

### **Enjoy each day as it comes**

Is your diary for 2020 already filling up? That is fine, but also bear in mind what has been called 'the sacrament of the present moment.'

That is what the 17th century French Jesuit and spiritual writer Pere Jean-Pierre de Caussade called it. He wrote: The present moment holds infinite riches, but you will only enjoy them to the extent of your faith and love. The will of God is manifest in each moment, an immense ocean which the heart only fathoms in so far as it overflows with faith, trust and love."

So this year, try and live your life a day at a time. You can't change the past, yesterday is history; and you can't live in the future, tomorrow is mystery. The present is really all you have.

When Jesus spoke about God, He always spoke about Him being where we are, in the here and now. He is our Father, our vine, our Shepherd, and His Spirit wants to walk with us each day.

Dear All,

I hope you have had a wonderful Christmas and a very happy new year.

In late November, All Saints Branksome invited us to a service in the evening which was billed as a contemporary service exploring science and faith. I was delighted to be able to go along and join in. The speaker at the service, James Wallace-Hadrill, had been a scientist at CERN, Geneva, and was still an active member of Christians in Science. I was very impressed by his talk – his first sermon – and thought it would be of interest to the wider Canford Cliffs and Sandbanks community! With his permission I have serialised it below.

Tom

*<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

*<sup>2</sup>Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

*<sup>3</sup>There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*

*<sup>4</sup>Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,*

*<sup>5</sup>Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.*

*<sup>6</sup>His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.*

*<sup>7</sup>The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.*

*<sup>8</sup>The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.*

*<sup>9</sup>The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*

*<sup>10</sup>More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.*

*<sup>11</sup>Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.*

*<sup>12</sup>Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.*

<sup>13</sup>*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*

<sup>14</sup>*Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

This beautiful psalm has been described by C S Lewis as "*the greatest poem in the Psalter and one of the greatest lyrics in the world.*" It has inspired music by Haydn, Bach, Beethoven and Schütz. It is even used by Boney M in The Rivers Of Babylon. And of course many preachers use the last verse at the start of a sermon: "*may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer*"

So that is quite a formidable passage to tackle as my first talk, and I have no theological training to qualify me. But I am a Scientist and a Christian, and I chose this psalm as a beautiful vision of how Nature and Scripture stand alongside each other to deepen our understanding of God and of our own lives. My scientific training was as a particle physicist at Oxford, and I spent my early years at CERN in Geneva hunting quarks.

While I was studying physics I read a little book called *What Is Life?* by the renowned father of quantum physics Erwin Schrödinger. There I met for the first time a scientist daring to ask Big Questions, and wondering whether science could ever really hope to answer those questions.

This led me to attend some talks during a mission to the university, where I met people for whom Jesus is alive and is a faithful friend. I heard the promise that if I committed myself to becoming a follower of Jesus then I could experience his life in me and know the purpose of God in my life. I took this as a testable theory – an idea to which I will return. I knew that as a scientist I could not reject this theory without testing its truth myself. So I prayed a prayer of commitment myself, expecting to find no change. Instead I found the next day that the world had become a completely different place, with a living God, with purpose, with unshakeable promises and unceasing love. So now I had become both a Scientist and a Christian believer, and that has been my unshaken position for almost fifty

years. I moved on from Physics to work in IT, and now I have retired, but these loves stand firm.

Enough of my background, let us look at the Psalm. Perhaps we could think of the psalmist offering us a little mirror to help us understand God and our relationship with Him. A bit like the hand-held mirror that you get in a place like the Sistine Chapel to help you look at the ceiling without straining your neck. And with this mirror he shows us first two Books about God, and then ourselves.

First in v 1-6 he directs our mirror to look at the heavens and all creation, where we are blinded by the sun and by the glory of God's handiwork, as we study the Book of Nature.

Then in v 7-11 he turns our mirror to look at the Book of Scripture, where we are dazzled by the light, joy and wisdom that God gives us through Scripture.

Finally in v 12-14 he turns the mirror on ourselves, where we look into our own hearts, are rather ashamed of what we find, and pray that they may be changed by the light of the two Books of God.

So we have a very balanced view of how we can learn about God and our inner selves: from studying **both** the Book of Nature, **and** the Book of Scripture. Both can tell us about God, both say that God provides light to illuminate our lives (the sun in its daily course, and the radiant commands of the Lord). They may tell us different things, and what we learn depends on the questions we ask. But they both speak of God, like the two sides of one coin.

If you think that being Christian and being a Scientist are mutually exclusive, let me assure you that the latest studies show that the proportion of believers is exactly the same among scientists as among non-scientists. Many famous scientists have been firm believers, such as Boyle, Faraday, Kepler, Linnaeus, Maxwell, Newton and Pasteur, and for those who share this position, you might like to know there is a society called Christians in Science which has an active local branch in Southampton. Scientists, you do not have to turn your brain off when you follow Jesus!



## CALENDAR FOR JANUARY

Wed 1      10.30 am  
 Fri 3      10.30 am

NO SERVICE AT ST. NICOLAS  
***Coffee Morning in hall***

### **EPIPHANY**

Sun 5      8.00 am  
             10.30 am  
             6.00 pm

Holy Communion  
 Parish Communion and baptism  
 Evening Prayer

Wed 8      10.30 am  
 Fri 10      9.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*  
 Baby Group

### **EPIPHANY 1**

Sun 12      8.00 am  
             10.30 am  
             6.00 pm

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

Wed 15      10.30 am  
 Thurs 16    10.00 am  
 Fri 17      10.30 am

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

### **EPIPHANY 2**

Sun 19      8.00 am  
             9.30 am  
             10.30 am  
             6.00 pm

Holy Communion  
 Family Service  
 Parish Communion  
 Choral Evensong

Wed 22      10.30 am

Holy Communion *at St. Nicolas*

Thurs 23	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
	3.30 pm	Magazine collation
Fri 24	9.30 am	Baby Group

**EPIPHANY 3**

Sun 26	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	Matins ( <i>Sunday Club in hall</i> )
	6.00 pm	Evening Prayer
Tues 28	10.00 am	Craft Group <i>in hall</i>
Wed 29	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>

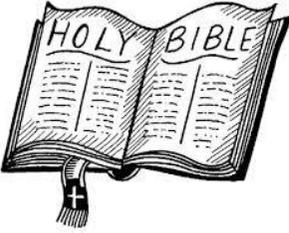
**FEBRUARY**

**CANDLEMAS**

Sun 2	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	10.30 am	Parish Communion
	6.00 pm	Candlemas Service - Darkness to Light
Wed 5	10.30 am	Holy Communion <i>at St. Nicolas</i>
Thurs 6	10.00 am	Parish Art Group
Fri 7	10.30 am	<b>Coffee Morning in hall</b>

**ADVANCE NOTICE:**

The Royal Motor Yacht Club Service of the Sea will take place on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> February at 6.00 p.m. at the Church of the Transfiguration.



## **SUNDAY READINGS IN** **JANUARY**

### **Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> 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 emphasises the accessibility of God's promise to the gentile community through his own special calling as apostle.*

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 12<sup>th</sup> January - Epiphany 1**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 42.1-9

*This passage shows God speaking into the pain of exile to send a servant who will bring justice, and not to Israel only, but to all nations.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 3.13-end

*We celebrate Jesus' baptism this first Sunday of Epiphany. Jesus has come into the world as a light to the nations. The passage has an echo of Isaiah 42 "the spirit of God descended upon him".*

### **Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January - Epiphany 2**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 49.1-7

*Isaiah foresees a special servant of God, known and called by God even before he was born.*

NEW TESTAMENT: 1 Corinthians 1.1-9

*Paul greets the Church at Corinth and rejoices that in every way it is enriched by the Lord. It is not lacking in spiritual gifts.*

GOSPEL: John 1.29-42

*John the Baptist identifies Jesus as one filled with God's Holy Spirit and Jesus begins to call his disciples.*

### **Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January - Epiphany 3**

OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 9.1-4

*God's presence in the world is identified when the people of Galilee are enlightened and rejoice when their burdens are lifted from their shoulders.*

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 4.12-23

*Jesus urges the enlightened people of Galilee to repent. He calls his first four disciples and they leave their fishing nets and follow him.*

## **NEW OR OLD?**

It's a new year so let's talk about 'old' and 'new.' Which do you prefer? Presumably the young men and women dancing in the freezing water of a fountain in Trafalgar Square think it's exciting. Give it a few weeks and they'll find it's no different from last year or the one before. Its only virtue is that it's 'new!'

We all like some new things; from a new carpet for the living room to a new baby in the family. But 'newness' doesn't last long. A man who had bought a new car (it cost him £40,000) was told, as he got in to drive out of the dealer's forecourt, that as soon as it got on to the road its value would drop by ten thousand pounds. It was no longer 'new', but 'used' and 'second-hand.'

We are also a bit ambivalent about 'old'. The antiques fan searches for that two-hundred-year-old cup that will one day make him a fortune. But tastes change and lovely things are eventually dubbed 'old-fashioned.' We all say we respect 'old age' until eventually we get there and find that we can't see, can't hear, can't walk and can't remember. (I speak from experience!)

In fact, 'old' and 'new' are simply descriptions. What is new now will one day be old. It's simply the way the world is. The Bible honours age and asks us to learn from the past. But it ends with the promise of God: 'See, I am making everything new!' Everything! That is what we mean by 'the Kingdom of Heaven.'

*Canon David Winter*

## **Bridge Over Troubled Water**

The album *Bridge Over Troubled Water* by Simon and Garfunkel was released 50 years ago, on 26th January 1970.

It topped the charts in ten countries and sold 25 million records. It was their fifth and final studio album.

The song itself, one of their most widely known, was influenced by gospel music, especially the Swan Silvertones' version of *Mary Don't You Weep*, which includes the line "I'll be your bridge over deep water, if you trust in my name" – a debt acknowledged by Simon.

Art Garfunkel initially refused to sing lead on the song, but was eventually persuaded, with Paul Simon transposing the key to suit him. Simon wanted a gospel piano sound, and so hired session musician Larry Knechtel. The song was initially two verses long, but he thought it was too short and asked

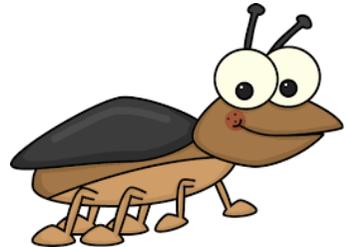
Knechtel to play a third verse, to which he wrote more lyrics.

Despite the many accolades that followed, the duo split up later in 1970, with Garfunkel concentrating on his film career.

Simon and Garfunkel are both Jewish, and many of the later songs written by Simon have Christian overtones – this stunning song is no exception.

*Tim Lenton*

## **Remember the Millennium Bug?**



Just over 20 years ago, there was widespread panic – or at least deep concern – over what might happen when the calendar switched over to the year 2000 on 1st January, and the effect on computers of the so-called Y2K ‘Millennium Bug’.

The problem was that computers so long ago were laughably short of memory, and to save space, years in dates had all been recklessly programmed with two figures – for example 80, instead of the full 1980. So, when they reached 2000, no-one knew what would happen. Would the computers think they were back at 00, the beginning of time, or in some other dimension where time had no meaning?

Possible consequences ranged from the Second Coming to explosions in nuclear plants and aircraft falling out of the sky. Many experts predicted disaster of one kind or another. Churches were not immune. But in the end more or less nothing happened. Some put this down to the preventative

work done by computer technicians – at a price – while others thought it was never going to happen anyway. The cost of countering the Y2K Bug threat cost Britain nearly £400 million. There were problems, but nothing huge – except the sigh of relief.

*Tim Lenton*

The Rectory  
St. James the Least



My dear Nephew Darren

Your idea for our two churches to hold a combined New Year's Day walk was an admirable one, although I could sense a certain clash of cultures when your party arrived at the starting point with boots, waterproofs and GPS equipment. Our own group, rather anticipating tottering between tea shops, with a little light shopping in between, sported tweed suits, shopping bags and furled umbrellas.

Even the two sets of dogs seemed bemused with one another, with your Westies and King Charles spaniels making enough noise to scare all the wildlife in the county, and our Retrievers puzzled why the pheasants were not dropping from the sky. Dear Miss Mill's miniature poodle, with the painted toenails, will probably need life-long counselling; the furthest she had walked previously was from her bed to beside the dining room table.

The electronic navigation equipment brought by members of your group made me think that if only the wise men had had these blessings, they wouldn't have had to follow anything as unreliable as a star. Although I suppose that

instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, they would then have arrived with an MP3 player, a mobile phone which would have been obsolete before Jesus' first birthday and a CD of Madonna's greatest hits.

I do concede that our two congregations learned much from one another. Our ladies were most interested to hear about the latest in personal trainers, while yours discovered how to bring a pan of jam to a rolling boil. Your men seemed impressed to hear of squirrel shooting while ours gathered useful tips for caravanning abroad. And poor Miss Mill's poodle learned that the great outdoors was a parallel and hostile universe.

By mid-afternoon, however, the balance of power shifted. When the leader of the walk from your group lost his SatNav, our members felt the need to assert themselves. The gentlemen navigated using wind direction, moss on trees and angles of the sun, while our ladies, with tweed skirts furled somewhat higher than one would have wished, showed yours how to wade through peat bog without complaining.

Perhaps town and country really can learn from one another. But if Major Bullock's wife arrives for Mattins next Sunday sporting the latest gym gear, you will have much to answer for.

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace

## TO MAKE YOU SMILE .....

### ***I'll sing to that...***

*There was a church where the new minister and the organist were not getting along. As time went by this began to spill over into the worship service.*

*One week the minister preached on commitment and how we all should dedicate ourselves to the service of God. The organist played: 'We Shall not be Moved'.*

*The next week the minister preached on tithing and how we all should gladly give to the work of the Lord. The organist responded with: 'Jesus Paid it All'.*

*The third week the minister preached on gossiping and how we should all watch our tongues. The organist played all verses of: 'I Love to Tell the Story'.*

*By now the minister had become very discouraged with the situation, and the following Sunday told his congregation that he was considering resigning. The organist closed the service with: 'O Why Not Tonight?'*

*As it came to pass, the minister did indeed resign. The following Sunday he informed the church that it was Jesus who had led him there and it was Jesus who was taking him away. The organist then outdid himself with: 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus.'*

## **HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY**

Holocaust Memorial Day on 27th January marks the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp. One of the disturbing questions that arises from the horrors of the Holocaust is *'where was God when the six million died?'*

In his moving memoir, *'Night'*, Eli Wiesel tells the story of an execution that the prisoners were forced to witness. Two men and a boy were made to stand on chairs with nooses around their necks. At the guards' signal, the chairs were

kicked from beneath their feet. The men died instantly as the fall broke their necks, but the boy, flailed about, gasping for breath. Wiesel heard someone cry out, *'For God's sake, where is God?'* In that moment, he heard a voice inside: *'Where is He? This is where: hanging here from this gallows'.*

As we think of this boy dying on the gallows, we are reminded of another Jew, who suffered and died on a cross. As the crowd gathered around the cross, it was Jesus who posed the same question: *'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'* (Matt 27:46).

Jesus became a human being, because God wanted to identify with His lost and suffering world. He willingly took upon Himself God's judgment for the sin of the world, as God turned away from the Son he loved: *'God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God'* (2 Cor. 5:21).

So where was God when the six million died? The truth is that God is present in our suffering, to identify and suffer with us and to provide help, hope and meaning to those who suffer. Whatever we go through this New Year, let's not forget this truth

## **ALTAR FLOWERS**

Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup>	The Guild
Sunday 12 <sup>th</sup>	The Guild
Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup>	Wendy Bales
Sunday 26 <sup>th</sup>	Wendy Bales



## **MAGAZINE DEADLINE**

The deadline for the February edition of the  
Church Magazine is

**Friday 17<sup>th</sup> January**