

THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

DECEMBER 2009 & JANUARY 2010



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Touching Heaven, Changing Earth

The phrase 'Touching Heaven, Changing Earth' has been chosen to describe our Christmas services this year. As this is a double issue of *The Clarion*, for both December and January, it could be said to describe the three seasons of the Church year that we will celebrate in these two months: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. Each season has its own character: Advent is a time of preparation, Christmas a time of joy, and Epiphany a time of celebration of the proclamation of Christ to the world. As we mark these three seasons we have the opportunity of touching heaven, of becoming more aware of God's presence and allowing that awareness to change our lives, and so the lives of others, here on earth.

In biblical imagery, heaven is a place of joy, where God is fully present, in the power of his steadfast love, justice, peace and mercy. In the words of the well known Christmas carol, God in the form of his Son, 'came down to earth from heaven'. The birth of Jesus Christ is a joyful event because it brings heaven closer to earth, inviting us to stretch out and open our hands so that we may touch and be touched by God's healing power of love. This power is paradoxically made known to us in the birth of a baby, a helpless individual born in obscurity and poverty.

Advent gives us almost four weeks to prepare ourselves to rejoice at this coming of heaven to earth. The way to prepare is through increased prayer and meditation/contemplation, which in themselves are a way for us to touch heaven, as we listen to God's word and are shaped by it. Traditionally, Advent also includes some form of fasting, so that when Christmas comes, our rejoicing is enhanced by appreciating those good things that we have gone without in the preceding weeks.

Our Christmas rejoicing is all the greater if we have prepared for it in a meaningful way, but this is difficult to do in a society that encourages us to spend the weeks leading up to Christmas as though Christmas had already arrived. This means that Christmas Day and the days following are often an anti-climax so that our joy is in danger of becoming empty and hollow. At Christmas and the twelve days that

follow we should logically concentrate our rejoicing at the birth of Jesus Christ.

The twelve days bring us through the beginning of the new year to Epiphany, which was once a more important celebration in the Church than Christmas. Epiphany celebrates the coming of Christ not just to and for one part of the earth – the place and the people where he was born – but for the whole earth, all people and all creation, reconciling all to God through God's power and love. This radical reconciliation will finally be completed at some future time, at 'the Second Coming'. It is at the Second Coming, Christians believe, that Jesus Christ will return and the whole creation will finally be changed and reconciled through judgement to God. Therefore our Advent preparation should be understood not just as a time to prepare to celebrate Christmas, but also as a time to prepare for the Second Coming, which for the most part we would rather ignore because it has all sorts of implications that make us at the very least uncomfortable. It is at the Second Coming that heaven will fully touch earth and earth will be forever changed as heaven and earth become one. If we use Advent to prepare well for Christmas, we will be more prepared for that Second Coming, whenever it may be.

As the Church once more begins the season of Advent and so prepare to celebrate Christmas and Epiphany, may God's love and heaven's joy fill our hearts and through us the hearts of others.

With all best wishes for Advent and a joyful Christmas and Epiphany.

Ginny Thomas

Books for Advent

If you are unable to attend St. Mary's Advent course, but would like to use Advent as a time for preparation for Christmas, the following books are suggested:

The Meaning is in the Waiting by Paula Gooder (Canterbury Press: £8.99)

Joyful Christianity: Finding Jesus in the World by Cally Hammond (SPCK: £8.99)

Watching & Waiting by Kenneth Stevenson (Canterbury Press: £12.99)

What The Donkey Saw

No room in the inn, of course,
And not that much in the stable,
What with the shepherds, Magi, Mary
Joseph, the heavenly host –
Not to mention the baby
Using our manger as a cot.
You couldn't have squeezed another cherub in
For love nor money.

Still, in spite of the overcrowding,
I did my best to make them feel wanted,
I could see the baby and I
Would be going places together.

U.A. Fanthorpe

From 'Christmas Poems' (c) U.A. Fanthorpe. Printed
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www.enitharmon.co.uk

Babette's Feast

Karen Blixen was born in 1885 into a Unitarian bourgeois family by the name of Dinesen, on the island of Zealand in Denmark, and attended art school in Copenhagen, Paris, and Rome. Her father, an army officer and writer, hanged himself when she was only nine. In 1913 Karen Dinesen became engaged to her cousin, the Swedish Baron Bror von Blixen-Finecke. The couple moved to Kenya in early 1914 and used family money to establish a coffee plantation, hiring the local Kikuyu as workers. She wrote: 'Here at long last one was in a position not to give a damn for all conventions, here was a new kind of freedom which until then one had only found in dreams!' But the marriage was not a success and in 1921 they parted. Bror Blixen had given her syphilis, which was eventually cured, and the title of Baroness, which she used for the rest of her life. She stayed on at the farm, soon meeting the English big game hunter Denys Finch Hatton. They fell in love and Finch Hatton used Blixen's farmhouse as a home base for five years, until he died in the crash of his Gypsy Moth in 1931. That same year the coffee plantation failed due to the worldwide economic depression. The family sold the land to a residential developer, and the area is called Karen to this day. She returned to Denmark for good and began writing in earnest.

Her first book was published in America in 1934 under the pseudonym Isak Dinesen and won great acclaim, being republished in Denmark and England. Her second book, now the best known, was the autobiographical *Out of Africa*, published in 1937. It begins with the famous words: 'I had a farm in Africa at the foot of the Ngong Hills'. Its success established her reputation, and fifty years later Sydney Pollack made a film of it, starring Meryl Streep and Robert Redford, which won seven Oscars. Did you see it?

Blixen wrote her books in English and then translated them into Danish. Her English style is limpid, understated and sometimes very funny. As a story-teller she was widely respected by contemporaries, including Ernest Hemingway and Arthur Miller. She kept up the public image of a charismatic, mysterious old Baroness with an insightful third eye, and became an inspiring figure in Danish culture. She died in 1962 at Rungstedlund, on her family's estate, at the age of 77, apparently of malnutrition; perhaps she was anorexic. If so, it is ironic, because one of her last books contains her best-known short story called 'Babette's Feast'. This also was made into a film, by Gabriel Axel in 1987, and won an Oscar. With apologies to those who know the story only too well, I am going to re-tell it.

'Babette's Feast' starts with a portrait of two elderly and pious Christian sisters, Martina (named after Martin Luther) and Philippa (named after Philip Melancthon). They live in a small village on a remote and beautiful Norwegian fjord called Berlevaag. (In the Finnmark, right round the top, facing the Barents Sea. The film makers, thinking this too glamorous, transposed the setting to the flat and boring west coast of Jutland.) Philippa and Martina are the daughters of a pastor who called himself 'the Dean' and founded his own strict Christian sect. The story is set in 1885; the pastor himself has long since died, and the sect draws no new converts, but the aging sisters preside lovingly over their dwindling band of white-haired, rural believers. Sadly, with age, they are getting rather bitchy and disputatious.

In the mid-1850s, the sisters had both been very beautiful. Each had been courted by an impassioned suitor: Martina by a charming but dissolute young officer of the Swedish cavalry, (Norway was part of Sweden from 1814 till 1905), and Philippa by a recuperating star baritone from the Paris opera. Each suitor falls desperately in love, and develops grand plans both for himself and the angel he imagines by his side. However, the young officer is too tongue-tied to propose, and goes back to his regiment. The opera singer spots that Philippa has a superb natural singing voice but makes the mistake of teaching her the part of Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and they sing the seduction duet. At the end he cannot resist kissing her - and goodbye to any chances of making her a famous opera diva. Both daughters choose instead a life of quiet piety, simplicity and good works in their father's footsteps. Their father had long considered his daughters to be his 'right and left hand', and he had spent much of his life ensuring that no one removed them.

Fifteen years later, when the sisters are in their fifties and their father long dead, 'a massive, dark, deadly pale' woman collapsed on their door step. She carried only a letter from Philippa's former suitor explaining that she is a refugee from counter-revolutionary bloodshed in Paris – the famous *Commune* of 1871, in which her husband and son have both been killed – and recommending her as a housekeeper. The sisters take Babette in, working for no wages but her keep, and they teach her how to prepare their unvarying daily fare of split cod and ale-and-bread soup. During the demonstration her face becomes absolutely expressionless. She turns out to be a benign figure who makes their money stretch much further through shrewd bargaining with fishermen and trades folk. The only link to her former life is a lottery ticket that a friend in Paris renews for her every year. One day this ticket wins her 10,000 francs, which would allow her to return to Paris in reasonable style, but she decides to use the money to prepare a dinner for the sisters and their small congregation, to mark what would have been the Dean's hundredth birthday. More than just an epicurean delight, the feast is an outpouring of Babette's appreciation and an act of self-sacrifice. Though she doesn't tell anyone,

Babette is spending her entire winnings on this gesture of gratitude.

The sisters agree to accept Babette's meal, and her offer to pay for the creation of a 'real French dinner'. She leaves the village for a few days as she must personally arrange for supplies to be sent. The ingredients are plentiful, sumptuous and exotic, including a large live turtle, a cage of quails and many bottles. Their arrival causes much consternation among the clan. As the various never-before-seen ingredients arrive, and preparations begin, the sisters begin to worry that the meal will be, at best, a great sin of sensual luxury, and at worst some form of devilry. Babette after all is a Roman Catholic, and French at that! In a hasty conference, the sisters and the congregation agree to eat the meal, but to forego any pleasure in it, and to make no mention of the food during the entire dinner.

The dinner turns out to be remarkable by any standard. It begins with turtle soup, followed by *Blinis Demidoff* (little buckwheat pancakes with *crème fraîche* and a great dollop of caviar). Then comes *Caille en Sarcophage avec Sauce Perigourdine* (quail in a puff pastry vol-au-vent stuffed with *foie gras* and truffle slices). The salad is Belgian endive and walnuts in a vinaigrette and the cheese course is served with papaya, figs, grapes and pineapple. The grand finale is *Savarin au Rhum* (rum and sponge cake) with figs and glacéed fruits. The wines include an excellent Amontillado sherry, *Veuve Cliquot* 1860, which the villagers think must be lemonade because it is pale yellow and sparkles; and *Clos de Vougeot* 1846 from the famous vineyard on the Côte de Nuits in Burgundy. Babette has bought china, crystal and linens with which to set the table, so that the meal is served in a style worthy of the famous former chef of the *Café Anglais*, which is what Babette had been. Her previous life had been quite unknown to the sisters until she tells them after the meal.

Martina's former suitor, now a distinguished general married to a member of the Queen's court, turns up as one of the guests; his aunt is the local lady of the manor and a member of the old Dean's congregation. As a man of the world and former attaché in Paris, he knows

exactly what he is eating and drinking. He provides a commentary on the out-of-this-world quality of the meal, and makes a short speech. Although the other diners do their best to reject the earthly pleasures of the food and drink, Babette's extraordinary gifts, as a *Chef de Cuisine* and a true *connoisseur*, break down their distrust and superstition, elevating them not only physically but spiritually. 'They only knew that the room had been filled with a heavenly light, as if a number of small halos had blended into one glorious radiance'. Old wrongs are forgotten, ancient loves are rekindled, and a mystical redemption of the human spirit settles over the table, thanks to the general elation nurtured by consuming so many fine delicacies and wines. The celebration around the table shadows 'the infinite grace... [that] had been allotted to them, and they did not even wonder at the fact, for it had been but the fulfillment of an ever-present hope.'

The sisters assume that Babette will return to Paris, and when she tells them that all her money is gone and that she is not going anywhere, they are aghast. Babette grandly tells them that dinner for 12 at the *Café Anglais* would have cost 10,000 francs. Martina cries and says, 'You will be poor now all your life', to which Babette replies, 'I am a great artist. A great artist, Mesdames, is never poor'. Philippa, trembling from head to foot and weeping, embraces Babette and says 'In paradise you will be the great artist that God meant you to be. And, how you will enchant the angels.'

It is a touching story, with a fairy-tale ending, well worth its Oscar. But where does the theology come in? I return to the General's speech, quoting in full:

'Mercy and truth, my friends, have met together. Righteousness and bliss shall kiss one another. Man, my friends, is frail and foolish. We have all been told that grace is to be found in the universe. But in our human foolishness and short-sightedness we imagine divine grace to be finite. For this reason we tremble before making our choice in life, and having made it, we again tremble for fear of having chosen wrong. But the moment

comes when our eyes are opened, and we see and realize that grace is infinite. Grace, my friends, demands nothing of us but that we shall await it with confidence and acknowledge it in gratitude. Grace, brothers, makes no conditions and singles out none of us in particular; grace takes us all to its bosom and proclaims a general amnesty. See! That which we have chosen is given unto us, and that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us. Ay, that which we have rejected is poured upon us abundantly. For mercy and truth have met together and righteousness and bliss have kissed each other.'

The religious context of this story has been much written about. It is obvious in the simple piety of the sisters and their flock, in the eucharistic overtones of the supper (there are twelve guests), and the intimate connection between the bodily and spiritual. I love the contrast in Babette. On the one hand she is the poor widow who gave all that she possessed, living as a servant in simple poverty for 14 years and then performing an act of selfless gratitude on people who can hardly understand what is being given. The sisters' only comment after the meal is 'It was quite a nice dinner Babette'. On the other hand there is her fierce pride in displaying, for one more time, the culinary genius that had made her famous in Paris all those years ago, and to claim 'I am a great artist, Mesdames!'

The story rings with what is sometimes called non-duality. 'Mercy and truth are met together'. The General's speech begins and ends with this quotation from Psalm 85 verse 10. Here, perhaps, you get a glimpse of why I like this story of a general who quotes the psalms, and even has a stab at the theology of grace. On grace he is well ahead of me, but his main point seems to be about life choices. He says: 'we tremble before making our choice in life, and having made it we again tremble for fear of having chosen wrong.' He concludes that this is unnecessary because 'that which we have

chosen is given unto us, and that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us.' It seems to be a way of saying that we can have our cake and eat it. In a sense that proved true for him. He had come to the dinner reflecting sadly on the shyness and odd reluctance that had led him to draw back from Martina those thirty years earlier. In the intervening years he had enjoyed all the worldly success and recognition that he had wished for, but he had recently come to recognize that 'something was wrong somewhere', for he was not perfectly happy. When they had parted originally he had declaimed impulsively 'I shall never see you again. For I have learned here that fate is hard and that in this world there are things that are impossible'. Babette's dinner had produced a complete reversal. When the time comes to say goodbye, he seizes Martina's hand, holds it for a long time and then says 'I have been with you every day of my life. You know, do you not, that it has been so'. And she says, 'Yes, I know that it has been so'. That is presumably what he meant when he had said in his speech: 'that which we have refused is, also and at the same time, granted us.' A fairy-tale ending, indeed.

I was up at Cambridge after the war, reading engineering, as befitted a budding sapper officer, but two other careers attracted me. The first was medicine, with its strong emphasis on tending the sick and so doing some tangible good in the world. However, years of studying biology (a subject quite new to me) and of clinical training stretched ahead and the prospect of not qualifying until I was nearly thirty did not appeal. So I shied away. By then I had fallen under the spell of the Franciscans at Cambridge, not to mention the Intercollegiate Christian Union, the SCM, college chapel, missions to strawberry pickers at Wisbech and to a suburban parish of Birmingham and various other enticing varieties of religious experience. It seemed an obvious move for a keen young Christian to offer himself for ordination. And that I did, passing the selection procedure devised by the CACTM (as it then was) and being accepted for a place at

theological college in Lincoln. But the army, not unreasonably, protested that they had just paid for my three years of expensive education on full pay, and said that I must serve for at least another five years as *quid pro quo* unless I could claim to be excused as a conscientious objector. As I had served, conscientiously enough, on active duty for the last five years of the war, this would hardly wash. Like young Lieutenant Löwenhielm in the story, I went back to my regiment, determined to try my hardest to make a go of it. By the time five years were up, I had got married, passed into the Staff College and got rather settled into an army career. Very interesting jobs came up. Each time I promised myself to stay in for just this one more posting and then make the move, but somehow the occasion to leave the army never quite arose and thirty years later, like Löwenhielm, I found myself holding high rank and honored.

It all came as rather a surprise and I often felt a bit of a fraud. Field-Marshal Lord Carver, whom I much admired, entitled his autobiography 'Out of Step' and I felt much the same. (We had been at the same house at school, though he had left several years before I arrived.) I married a doctor and after that the medical profession always felt very close to me. On leaving the army I was hi-jacked, completely out of the blue, by the Dean of Windsor to become Warden of his conference centre, of which half the workload was clergy training. Later I was invited to chair the boards of two missionary societies. So I have fulfilled both my medical and priestly aspirations by proxy, so to speak. As the General put it: 'That which I have chosen is given unto me, and that which I have refused is, also and at the same time, granted me. Ay, that which I have rejected is poured upon me abundantly. For mercy and truth have met together and righteousness and bliss have kissed each other'.

I apologize for this outrageous ego-trip, but the enjoyment of excellent meals together has always been a great feature of St Mary's, not to mention the Big Lunch! So I thought that the story of this feast would form a suitable subject.

And perhaps my story will trigger some comparable reflections in the rest of us.
Hugh Beach.

Thursday lunch meeting on 12 November with Malcolm Goddard

Malcolm gave a most entertaining talk to the 25 people who attended this enjoyable lunch occasion. He spoke partly about 'What have I learned and gained from being a member of the Fabric Group' and partly about his career in the theatrical world.

One common theme for the two topics that emerged as he spoke was the advice from his father when he started out as a dancer, 'Watch and Learn'. In the Fabric Group each week Malcolm found himself tackling tasks with which he was totally unfamiliar, but on which in time he was able to achieve professional standards of care for the brass, silver and other items on which he worked, with much help from others in the group. Similarly on the stage, not as an actor but as a dancer, choreographer and director, he learned an enormous amount from the many great artistes with whom he worked.

Another common theme was coming to understand the enormous amount of behind-the-scenes work which makes church services and theatrical productions possible without the congregation or audience needing to know about it. Washing and ironing the linen, polishing the brass and silver, including all the items in the Treasury, renovating such varied items as the Sunday School's Nativity Costumes and offertory bags, cleaning and French polishing carved wooden figures and a table, folding the service sheets... the list goes on. As reported in the June Clarion, one special triumph came on a large brass cross that had been neglected to the point that its back was black, until after three months' hard work, Malcolm discovered the inscription on the base 'Omar Ramsden et Alwyn Carr me fecerunt' (Omar Ramsden and Alwyn Carr made me). This joy was enhanced when he saw their names on much silver displayed in the Burlington Arcade.

In the Fabric Group, Malcolm found special pleasure in the common interest that he and Anne Garten in particular share about the theatre. Anne has seen every play with which Malcolm has been involved in one way or another. More widely, Malcolm's abiding joy from his nearly twenty years at St Mary's, has been 'new friends' and a wonderful feeling of belonging. Living alone by choice, he finds great comfort from the quiet times and from the friendships that the church offers.

Malcolm's 'new friends' in the theatrical world read like an inventory of all the great and the good in that world. To pick out just a few of the many people with whom he has worked are Jack Hylton, Peter Sellars, Leslie Henson, Alicia Markova, Anton Dolin, Shirley Bassey, and Tommy Steele (Malcolm was the first choreographer to make Tommy dance). Want some more? Alma Cogan, Eatha Kitt, Max Bygraves, Ken Dodd, Jimmy Tarbuck, Barbara Windsor, Frankie Howard, Bruce Forsyth, Lulu, Millicent Martin. More? Try Glenda Jackson, Jessie Matthews, Penelope Keith, Paul Daniels, Sacha Distel, David Frost, Spike Milligan, Roy Orbison, Roy Castle, Jimmy Edwards, Frankie Vaughan, Morecombe and Wise. Still more? How about Harry Secombe, Joan Plowright, Anthony Hopkins, Peter Brooke, Trevor Nunn, Peter Zadek, John Dexter, John Cox, Dickie Henderson, Christopher Plummer, The Andrews Sisters, Rosemary Clooney, Sir Laurence Olivier.

Sorry, no space for any more!

Malcolm ended by saying he is now searching for his next challenge. Meanwhile he is writing his biography and has just finished writing a script of his version of Peter Pan that is being played this Christmas in Northampton. Might be good to see! When finally he needs to go to a care home, he plans to go to Brinsworth House in Twickenham, the Variety Club home for aged entertainers, in whose many corridors hang framed play bills with Malcolm's name as Choreographer or Director.

Malcolm's talk left me feeling how very fortunate St Mary's is to have such a talented, dedicated, committed, and very modest supporter.

Arthur Tait

Change five essentials in your basket and support 200,000 families as well as your own

If Britons simply swapped five of their weekly household buys to organic and Fairtrade items, they could not only save money, but support over 200,000 families, while feeding their own with wholesome choices, says organic and Fairtrade expert supplier Essential Trading. Essential Trading has been established since the 1970s and has witnessed first hand how the choices Britons make help thousands of families in some of the world's poorest communities. 'If we could encourage more Britons to change just five items from their weekly shop to Fairtrade or organic foods, they could be supporting over 200,000 families while feeding their own family nutritious, ethically produced food,' says Eli Sarre, sales and marketing director for Essential Trading. In this way, Eli believes people can reduce their 'food footprint' by giving back when buying their basics.

For example, by purchasing herbal tea, ground coffee, tinned tomatoes, baked beans and coconut milk from www.ethicallyessential.coop, shoppers would be supporting over 200,000 families in projects that create clean water in Mexico, help farmers to rebuild their farms in the Tsunami regions, support co-operative farmers in Italy, and a kindergarten and school in Egypt. This shop was over 25% (£2.08) cheaper than a comparable basket at one of the country's leading supermarkets.

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Al Ahli Hospital, Gaza

As many parishioners know, we support this hospital by means of our charity budget. Anita Vitullo aimed to meet with several PCC members to give them an update on the situation in that part of the Middle East. The Welfare Association for whom she works is responsible for channelling funds and grants to projects, including education, medical care, water conservation and those involving the improvements of problems 'on the ground'.

The difficulty of running the hospital stems from the acute shortage of so many of the requirements that are taken for granted in a

modern society: clean water, power, adequate food, sterile dressings, transportation, and recruitment of staff into a virtual war-zone, together with language and medical skills all exacerbate the problems.

However, all is not gloom and doom. Through necessity, the local people get on with their lives and become very adept and are able to achieve much despite these difficulties. With the help of donations from the Association, they have been able to install a mammography machine, purchase new x-ray equipment and assist in setting up an early detection unit for breast cancer, to name but a few.

Latest developments include:

The hospital started operating the 'early detection unit' on 18 June 2009.

It offers its services from Saturday through Thursday weekly.

The working team includes a woman who operates the equipment and performs all documentation; a radiologist performs film reading and prepare medical reports and refers cases to appropriate clinics; a secretary who performs all communications needed.

Anita emphasised the point that despite the political and socio-economic hazards in the area, life goes on and the 'imprisoned' population behind the dividing wall is still in need of primary and acute care. The hospital has to be on a semi-permanent emergency footing in case of increasing political conflict. The organisation was originally set up by five Arab businessmen who endowed five million US dollars to promote help in their homeland. The fund is now one million US dollars in deficit, hence the need to encourage donations worldwide.

Anita gave us a very moving account of life and effort in this troubled land; our money is well spent.

Helen Trafford

Parish Office Opening Times

The Parish Office will close on Wednesday 23 December and open on Monday 4 January 2010.

Even your Christmas tree can be fair trade

You've bought fair-trade tea and coffee for everyone, picked up some Traidcraft nuts, rejoiced when Tate and Lyle and Cadbury made their products ethical... but what about the Christmas tree?

Millions of us buy real fir trees to decorate our homes at Christmas, barely sparing a second thought as to where they have come from. Now that is about to change, thanks to Fairwind, which will be selling the first ever fair trade Christmas trees.

Fair Trees have been carefully grown in Denmark using seeds from Georgian farmers; that's how they're fair trade.

About five million Nordmann Fir Christmas trees are sold in the UK each year, but until now, very few people in the UK have been aware of the serious ethical issues behind buying these trees at Christmas. Although they are farmed in a responsible way, the seeds for Nordmann Firs are sourced from natural forests, mainly in Georgia.

Harvesting of the seeds in Georgia is carried out by hand under remarkably primitive conditions. The Georgian cone pickers climb up 30m high fir trees in order to reach the seeds. They work entirely without safety equipment and in 2004 two workers fell to their death during the harvest. Several accidents happen each year, but despite working in such dangerous conditions, the cone pickers are usually paid such low wages that it is difficult for them to support their families.

The trees are genuine Nordmann Fir trees of exceptional quality, grown using the best and ethically sourced seeds. They retain their needles exceptionally well and, best of all, are no more expensive than other Nordmann Fir trees.

The initiative has been supported by singer Katie Melua, who was born and bred in Georgia until she was eight.

'I am absolutely thrilled that fair trade has reached the poor cone pickers of Georgia,' she says. 'Fair Trees is a wonderful project that

helps improve the lives of many people in remote areas of Georgia, the country where I was born. I urge anyone who loves a real Christmas tree to buy a fair trade one this year; after all, it won't cost any more than a non-fair trade tree.'

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St James', Piccadilly W1J 9LL
Saturday 12 December 7.30pm

Christmas Present, Christmas Past
British Christmas music from the 16th & 20th centuries

Including works by

Holst, Warlock, Howells, Mathias, John Gardner,
Judith Weir, Judith Bingham & Thomas Adès
and
Sheppard, Tallis & Byrd

Nonsuch Singers
Stephen Disley organ
Graham Caldbeck conductor

Tickets available at the door or via
www.nonsuchsingersonline.com
Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park

The Seed Shop

Here in a quiet and dusty room they lie,
Faded as crumbled stone or shifting sand,
Forlorn as ashes, shrivelled, scentless, dry –
Meadows and gardens running through my hand.

In this brown husk a dale of hawthorn dreams,
A cedar in this narrow cell is thrust,
That will drink deeply of a century's streams,
These lilies shall make summer on my dust.

Here in their safe and simple house of death,
Sealed in their shells a million roses leap;
Here I can blow a garden with my breath,
And in my hand a forest lies asleep.
Muriel Stuart

Sent by Pat Schleger
From: The Week-End Book, 1928
Edited by F & V Meynell
London: The Nonesuch Press.

Confirmation at St. Paul's

On Saturday 7 November at 11.0am a celebration of the Eucharist, with Baptism, Confirmation and Ordination was held at St Paul's Cathedral. Seven members from St Mary's were presented for confirmation by our Parish Priest, Ginny Thomas. There were four adults and three children, and we joined ninety other people, all celebrating the beginning of their special journey with God.

The service focused on the Christian way and new life. Despite the large congregation, the service proceeded with dignity and grace, which owed much to the efficiency and watchful eyes of the ever present vergers and sidesmen. The Eucharist was celebrated by the Bishop of Winchester, a charismatic and spiritual priest who, despite the number of people present, and diversity of the sacraments being celebrated, gave equally to all.

For the candidates from St Mary the Bolton's, the confirmation ceremony marked the end of a series of thought provoking study meetings with Ginny and Ruth. It was also the first step of a new journey in Christ.

Anne Mulcare



St. Mary's Christmas Services 2009

Monday 7 December 10am

Mother & Toddler Group Nativity Play

Sunday 13 December

10.30pm All-Age Service Nativity Play

7.00pm Carol Service:

'Twixt Heaven and Earth'

Thursday 24 December Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Friday 25 December Christmas Day

10.30am Sung Parish Eucharist

Note: there will be NO 8am service on Christmas Day at St. Mary's but there will be an 8am service at St. Luke's, Sydney Street.

Passes for St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey

If you have relatives or friends staying over Christmas, why not take them to St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. We have four free passes for both. Contact the parish office to obtain them.

Clothes for homeless people

If you have any unwanted clothes in good condition please put them in the box at the back of church.

Is this a Collection Bag that I see before me?

That is the question. The answer should normally be self-evident.

A further question, however, relates to what, if anything, one should put in it.

Usually what is put in is cash (or a cheque) or a Gift Aid or other special collection envelope. In 2008 several thousand pounds were received by the church by this means in the form of loose cash. Very welcome though this was, it could have been even more had the donors given it through the Gift Aid scheme. This involves asking the Gift Aid Secretary for a numbered set of buff envelopes (one for each Sunday in the year plus one for Christmas Day). The desired amount of cash is placed in the appropriate envelope whenever one attends church and subsequently the Secretary (the only one who knows which number refers to whom) can reclaim tax on the total offering made in the year, as long as the donor has paid UK tax in that year sufficient to cover that claim. People who come to church infrequently may use the blue envelopes available in each pew and at the back of the church.

Many parishioners give via a standing order. The only downside to this is that unless they also put something in the collection bag each Sunday, others may (possibly) think they are mean and may feel that if some people at the service appear not to be giving anything, why should they. Hence we do encourage even those who contribute (often substantially) by standing order to use an envelope on a Sunday as well.

Boxes of envelopes for 2010 have arrived. If you are already a 'box person' and have not yet received yours, or not being a box person, would like to become one, please let me know.
John Barker

Harvest Festival Thank You

We have received 'Thank You' letters from the Earl's Court Community Project and St. Andrew's Fulham Fields for the donations to their homeless projects. The letters are displayed on the notice board in church.

Boxing Day Saturday 26 December

We at St Mary's are going to provide a meal at St Jude's Church on Boxing Day as our contribution to the Earl's Court Project's Christmas Outreach. The meal will be prepared in our church kitchen and taken up to St. Jude's. If you can help in any way with this, either practical or financial, please talk to Margarete Geier: 020 7373 1639

***Wishing you all a
Happy and Blessed Christmas
and a
Joyful and Peaceful New Year***

DIRECTORY

Parish Postal Address, Telephone, Fax & Website

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www.stmarytheboltons.org.uk

Office open 9.15am – 2.15pm Monday to Friday

Churchwardens

Mark Nichols 020 7370 0752

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie 020 7384 3246.

Director of Music Graham Caldbeck 07774 655028

Verger / Caretaker David Ireton

020 7244 8998 / 07881 865386 Day off Wednesday

Advocate Verena Tschudin 020 7351 1263

Co-ordinators:

Monday Bible Study Group Pat Schleger

020 7589 2359

Wednesday Bible Study Group Margarete Geier

0207 373 1639 **Young Adults Bible Study Group**

Jack Dunn call parish office

Clarion Editor Verena Tschudin 020 7351 1263,

tschudin@fastnet.co.uk

Flowers Boo Simpson 020 8878 9898

Mother & Toddlers position vacant **Prayer Network**

Verena Tschudin 020 7351 1263

Readers & Intercessors Rota Mary Meeson call parish office

Reading at St Cuthbert's and St Matthias

School Sheila Gibbs 0208 788 9744

Thursday monthly lunch June Brudenell

020 7352 7815 and Ann Tait 020 7352 5127

Social Secretary Margarete Geier

Sunday School Jane Dass 0207 370 5309

Clarion Distribution Elizabeth Davson

Assistant Treasurer Bill Gallagher 020 7384 3246.

Contributions for the February Clarion should be sent in to the church office by 23 January