

# THE CLARION

The Magazine of The Parish of St Mary The Boltons

rooted in faith • open in thought • reaching out in service

DECEMBER 13 & JANUARY 14

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## The Twelve Days of Christmas

Although the origins of celebrating the twelve days of Christmas are unclear, it is thought that the custom became established in the sixteenth century. William Shakespeare wrote his play *Twelfth Night* as an entertainment for the close of the Christmas season, the twelfth day being particularly associated with revelry and the Lord of Misrule. The twelfth day falls on 5 January, the eve of Epiphany, which begins a new season in the Church's year.

Today we have almost lost the custom of celebrating the twelve days of Christmas. Preparations for Christmas begin so far in advance – weeks and even months ahead – that when Christmas Day comes it can be something of an anti-climax. As soon as Boxing Day is over, attention turns to preparing to celebrate New Year's Eve and Christmas is soon forgotten; not many people today will keep their Christmas decorations up until 5 January.

Christmas is rightly a time of joy and rejoicing. If we cut short our rejoicing we are in danger of losing the significance and wonder of Christmas; that for the sake of all humanity and the world, God the Lord and Creator of all things became a human being through his Son. It was this Son, Jesus, who in the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians, 'emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross'.

The more we allow the significance of Jesus' birth to enter our hearts and minds, the more we reflect on the mystery of the incarnation – of the Word made flesh – the greater our celebration. So great is the mystery that one or even two days are not long enough for us to enter into the Christmas spirit of joy and thanksgiving, the spirit that also encourages us to reach out to others, especially to people in need, so that they too may have something to be joyful about and share our joy.

As it has always been, we celebrate the twelve days of Christmas against the backdrop of a world where there is much pain and suffering, where there is hatred, injustice and worse.

We are able to celebrate because we know that with the birth of Jesus Christ, God through His love for the world, has acted decisively in bringing new hope and new life into the world. It is this new life in Jesus Christ that pierces and dispels the darkness of the world, a darkness that will finally be overcome at that future time when Christ will come again.

May the twelve days of Christmas therefore be a time of great rejoicing for you, your families and friends as we once more celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ and the wonder of God's love for the world.

With all good wishes for a joyful Christmas and the New Year.

*Ginny Thomas*

## Books for Advent

Janet Morley: *Haphazard by Starlight: A poem a day from Advent to Epiphany*, SPCK.

For each day there is a poem (some classics but the majority by 20<sup>th</sup> century authors), with a short analysis and a question for personal thought. This book is a companion piece to Morley's Lent poetry book published earlier this year, *The Heart's Time*.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: *God is in the Manger: reflections on Advent and Christmas*, Westminster John Knox Press.

This book too, has a reflection for each day, of with short excerpts taken from Bonhoeffer's letters and Christmas sermons, together with a passage from Scripture and additional thoughts from other writers.

Paul Nicholson: *An Advent Pilgrimage*, (Kevin Mayhew)

Paul Nicholson is a Jesuit and this book falls within the Ignatian tradition of self-examination and spiritual exercises. Each day there is a gift to ask for, a reflection and a prayer.

Paul Ferguson: *Great is the Mystery of Faith*, Canterbury Press.

Not strictly an Advent Book, but if you would like to explore more about what lies behind our words in worship – in the Eucharist, the creeds, prayers, collects – this book will provide a deeper understanding and meaning of

the words we say. It will help to make stronger connections between the words and our daily experience of God's presence in our lives.  
*Ginny Thomas*

**Thursday 5 December  
Taizé Service  
at 7.30pm**



Come, be still, find peace.  
A time of quiet contemplation with readings, prayer and the beautiful songs of Taizé.

**Thursday 12 December:  
Thursday Lunch at 12.30**

The next Thursday Lunch will be on Thursday 12 at 12.30pm. The title of the talk is Impressions of the Holy Land and speakers are Margarete Geier, Leo Fraser-Mackenzie and Mary Meeson. There will be a Eucharist at 11.45am preceding the lunch. If you would like to attend please put your name on the list at the back of the church.

**Dates for your Dairy**

**Sunday 8 December**

10.30am All Age Worship with Nativity Play  
7pm Carol Service

**Tuesday 24 December**

Christmas Eve:  
Crib Service 4pm  
Midnight Mass 11.30pm

**Wednesday 25 December**

Christmas Day  
10.30am Sung Eucharist

**Christmas Outreach:  
Sponsor a Turkey**

The Earl's Court Community Protect is providing food over three days at Christmas this year. Instead of providing the Boxing Day meal (as we used to) we will provide the Christmas dinner. We will provide six turkeys all the vegetables, Christmas puddings and mince pies.

Please give generous donations to cover the costs of the food for those less fortunate than ourselves. No help is required this year  
*Margarete Geier*



**New Hymn Books**

We are now using our new version of the Ancient and Modern hymns books. We hope that members of the congregation will

consider sponsoring 'their' hymnal. We will be offering a bookplate so that you can nominate a person to be commemorated in the front of the hymnal. The cost per book will be £15 and if you would like to buy or dedicate a copy, please contact John in the Parish Office on 020 7835 1440 or [john@stmarytheboltons.org.uk](mailto:john@stmarytheboltons.org.uk), who will deal with your requests.

**A visit by Medic Malawi**

The Charity Committee arranges, when possible, for a speaker from each of the charities that St. Mary's supports. On Sunday 17 November we were delighted to welcome Stephen Drew from Medic Malawi, which is one of the recipients of our annual awards, this year of £1,000. Stephen's pulpit talk was inspirational and very much in line with the Christian nature of his charity.

Medic Malawi is a village community centred around the Anglican church of St. Andrew's in Mtunthama. It has a hospital serving 50,000 people. The complex comprises an operating theatre and dentist, a feeding and nutrition centre, two schools, a mill, two orphanages housing 100 children, housing for the staff and workers, and at present plans for an eye clinic. Every penny raised goes to the running costs of the village. There are no UK costs at all as the charity is run from Stephen's kitchen table in Shrewsbury, and even a simple promotional leaflet was provided free of charge by a Shropshire print service.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world with 80% of the population being subsistence farmers, they and their crops having to survive on only two months of rainfall a year. There are no other natural resources and 60%

of the population live on less than \$1.00 a day. Of a total population of approximately 12.5 million there are 750,000 orphans. In spite of this deprivation, they are joyous people and the country is often called the warm heart of Africa.

The priest of St. Andrew's, Father Petro, has a very Christian message to those of us fortunate to live in an affluent society: 'Cherish your plenty, give thanks for your plenty, share your plenty'. Sharing our plenty makes a huge difference to the people in Malawi whom we are helping. £50 feeds the whole of one of the orphanages for a day; an eye operation restoring sight costs £30. The running costs of the hospital alone are £4,000 a month.

Stephen told us that it was the quality of the local people in Malawi running the village that made the charity's work so effective and appreciated. He brought a message of thanks from them for all that our support is enabling them to do. After hearing Stephen's talk I was certain that our money was in good and safe hands. You can find out more about the charity on its web site: [www.medicmalawi.org](http://www.medicmalawi.org)  
*Anthony Williams*



## **Approaching death – Exploring the End of Life**

All Saints and All Souls is a special time in the church's year when we remember those who have gone before us and those who have died recently. It was

appropriate then, that on 2 November we were able to spend time with four speakers and Ginny to reflect on what death is, how it affects all of us, and what we can each do to prepare for our own deaths. The tone was positive throughout and more than 20 of us were led and engaged by the practical and sometimes graphic insights into different aspects of this sometimes scary topic.

In the book by Paul Badham, *Making Sense of Death and Immortality*, the basic statistics are that at age 65 we can expect on average another 9.9 years of good quality active life, followed by another 6.5 years of life increasingly affected by health issues. Of this last period the last 3.9 years will be significantly restricted by illness. While life expectancy is rising, most of this is in a time of ill health. With these sobering statistics as the background what did we learn in our presentations from a funeral director, a bereavement counsellor, a lawyer and a Macmillan advisor?

Jason Maiden from Chelsea Funeral Directors gave a straightforward account of the practical steps that one would have to go through to deal with a death, and this is different depending on whether the death took place at home or in a hospital or hospice. It was soon clear that there are a lot of decisions to be made at a very traumatic time, and the more of these that can be made in advance, the easier it will be when it comes to dealing with the aftermath if death. From questions of burial vs cremation, clothes to be worn for the body – oh, and for cremation, no shoes! – what to do with jewellery? Jason did say that they have good experience of getting wedding rings off fingers! Today nearly three quarters of people will be cremated and when one learns the price of a funeral plot, one can understand why... An average cremation costs around £3,500 but a graveyard burial will be up to five times that, and often there are no cemeteries close by.

We also learnt that if one has not been seen by a GP in the two weeks before death then there will be a referral for an autopsy by the coroner. There is apparently quite a backlog of autopsies for this reason. Bodies dehydrate quite quickly and this is one of the reasons for embalming, especially if families and friends wish to visit the body in a chapel of rest, or even at home. We discussed the advantages of woodland burials, cardboard coffins (not a good idea!), funeral plans and what to do with ashes. The cost of funerals has increased by 80% over the past ten years and a funeral plan does stabilise and spread the cost. Today many families ask that donations be made to charities rather than flowers being sent, and oddly, people will spend over £40 on a floral tribute but less than £20

on a charitable donation. The more one can plan ahead, the fewer the decisions that will have to be made under stress.

The second speaker was the Revd. Richard Adfield, a director of Cruse, the charity that helps in times of bereavement. His talk was entitled 'Good Grief - Understanding Bereavement'. With the help of a hand-out and a brochure from Cruse with several typical questions and reactions that people have to death, we were able to explore our feelings, which will often include hopelessness, anger and guilt. Grieving is a natural process and perhaps other faiths have a more formal road map for dealing with it, as for example the Jewish faith sees grief as a process with specific landmarks. One of his most telling remarks was that 'it takes a lifetime to prepare for death, but in the west we expect to deal with it in the last few months of life'. Richard also had a succinct overview of the 'Tasks of Mourning'. He suggested these are:

- to accept the reality of loss;
- to experience the pain of grief;
- to adjust to life without the dead person;
- to re-invest the emotion of grief.

In this way we can take a negative situation and learn to be positive again. He also had a useful list of biblical references to death and grieving, which is regularly addressed in both Old and New Testaments.



After a lunch with lively conversation and exchanges of views, we moved to the very practical but essential topic of 'Making your

Intentions Clear -The Legal Aspects', with Lucy Gordon from Spratt Endicott, Solicitors. Lucy covered living wills, which focus on a medical care plan, to allow one to retain control of what will happen when people are no longer able to make these choices for themselves because of stroke, incapacity or dementia. About 50% of the St. Mary's attendees had a living will in some form, which is much higher than the national average. Lucy strongly recommended setting up a Power of Attorney, and explained that these were complex and

formal documents, which one would be wise to get legal help with. There are two parts to the power of attorney: one dealing with financial matters and one dealing with health care. One can authorise the attorney holders to make medical decisions on one's behalf. If one completes this part of the power of attorney form, then this will take precedence over any living will, but imposes quite an additional burden of responsibility.

Finally, Lucy talked about wills, and 30% of the population have not made a will. She gave illustrations of the long and tortuous legal process that the estate would be subjected to in the event of no will having been made. Rules and tax rates keep changing and it is not even automatically the case that if no will is made that a surviving spouse would inherit all the estate. It is a good idea to keep any funeral wishes with the Will, and this can be in the form of a letter that can be updated as necessary.

The final speaker was Dr. Russ Hargreaves, who works at the Macmillan Centre at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. He had a sober and mainly clinical approach to the last weeks of life, and gave several quotations to set the scene. One from Epicurus, the Roman philosopher, was 'the art of living well and the art of dying well are one'. Another was from Cicely Saunders, founder of the hospice movement, who said 'how people die remains in the memory of those who live on'. Russ made the distinction between death and the process of dying, and said that people fear the process of dying, not so much death itself. We tend to worry about the impact of our deaths on other people. Today we crave certainty and with death there is a huge amount of uncertainty. He confirmed that 75% of us would prefer to die at home, but over 60% currently die in hospital.

Russ listed attributes of a good death that would include:

- control of symptoms;
- preparation for death for us and for our families;
- closure for us and for our families;
- a good relationship with the healthcare professionals.

He suggested that people visit a hospice to get a feeling for the people and the atmosphere. The one thing people do not need to worry about is pain at the end of life. Pain management has become a very well understood area and there are few situations where people die in pain today. He explained the difference between a Macmillan nurse and the true end of life specialists in cancer care who are the Marie Curie nurses. His final comment was that 'acceptance of death relieves us from suffering'.

Ginny then led a reflective short service to help us remember the place that the church and our faith has in this whole area. It was not possible without overloading the day to explore the theological aspects and approach to death and our beliefs in what happens after death to our souls. However all agreed we had learned a great deal about what dying means and how, if we prepare for it and consider it, we can approach death with a clear mind and minimise the suffering that it can so often cause. Thanks to Ginny, Ann Mulcare and Clare Ziegler for having spent time arranging this gripping topic, and to the excellent speakers who gave so much insight and encouragement. Contrary to expectation I came away from the day more optimistic and positive about the end of my life and know that I can do much to take control of how this will play out.

*Gerontius*

### **A Reflection for All Souls' Day**

*The following reflection was given at the evening service on 3 November when we remembered All Souls. It follows on from the previous day's discussion 'Approaching Death – Exploring the end of Life'.*

As the writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, there is a season for everything; every activity under heaven has its appropriate time. On All Souls' Day – or in the days around All Souls' Day – the Church gives us time to remember those who have died; a time to remember and give thanks, a time to acknowledge our grief and mourning; a time to be silent and a time to speak; a time to pray for those who have died, and a time to pray for ourselves.

However much we are prepared for death, it always comes as a shock and the death of someone we have loved and who has loved us is especially upsetting and painful, even shattering. We can feel ripped apart, a great void opens up both within us and in our daily lives, which can never really be filled because each of us is unique and no-one can fully replace another person.

Throughout our lives we are influenced, knowingly or unknowingly, by the people we know, and especially by the people we love and who love us. They add to the fabric of our lives, making them more interesting and more enjoyable, giving shape and depth to our everyday existence, making our lives what they are, often adding meaning and purpose. When such people die, their death leaves us bereft; we feel robbed and deprived of their life and their love, and so of our own lives.

As Christians we have a particular understanding of death. We do not believe that physical death – real and shattering though it is – is the end. As we come together for this service for All Souls, we believe that each of us has something called a soul: that part of us that acts as a bearer of our personhood, our personality, of who we truly are.

For Christians, the soul is central to our Christian hope – our completely confident expectation – of life after death. Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, we believe, (and if we are honest perhaps sometimes struggle to believe), that our souls survive bodily death and are remembered in God, who in love holds each unique person in his care. Our souls become the bridge between this life and the next.

Our bodies are after all not who we are; they are not our essence. During our lifetime our bodies change: the softness of a new born child changes and develops as he or she grows, until in older age our bodies are quite different. While our bodies do not survive our death, our souls do. Our belief in the resurrection is that we will have new bodies, not earthly ones but spiritual ones, eternal ones, which rest in and with God for eternity.

We have no idea what the reality of this life is like, and let's face it, for some people this is a complete absurdity. Yet for us who have faith, however tentatively we may hold it, we trust God; God who created us and loves us, who died for us and who is true to his promises, including the promise of eternal life. Through his death, Jesus has gone before us and he is God's pledge for our life beyond death.

As we remember with love and gratitude those who have died and as we mourn them, so we give thanks for all they have given us, and are comforted that they now rest with God, in his sure and safe keeping.

*Ginny Thomas*



### **Bottle Tops & Stamps**

Many thanks to all the people at St Mary's who have been collecting bottle tops and used

stamps during the course of the year.

Two cereal boxes full of stamps have gone off to the Leprosy Mission. In 2012 over £100,000 was raised from used stamps. Details of the work of the Leprosy Mission can be found on their web site:

[http://www.leprosymission.org.uk/documents/Stamp\\_Out\\_Leprosy.pdf](http://www.leprosymission.org.uk/documents/Stamp_Out_Leprosy.pdf)

I have taken approximately 45 carrier bags of bottle tops home from church during the year, which is a fantastic amount during such a short time. I don't yet know how many wheelchairs have been bought this year, but I am sure that thanks to the efforts of St Mary's congregation, the number will be up on last year!

*Fiona Parsons*

### **A Response to 'Forgive us our trespasses' (Part I)**

Once more I am very grateful to Hugh Beach for writing for *The Clarion* and bringing to our attention matters to do with our faith. In November's *Clarion* his article 'Forgive us our trespasses' (Part I) explored this particular

petition in the Lord's Prayer and I look forward to reading Part 2. In the meantime, I would like to respond to Part I with the following comments.

All translations are at best interpretations and often paraphrases and as Hugh notes, the translator's understanding and intention always needs to be taken into account. That there are at least two versions of this petition helps us to think about and explore what we are being forgiven for and why. Although the three words, 'trespasses', 'sins' and 'debts' are different, they have much in common and there remains the crucial understanding that we need to be forgiven, the most important part of the petition. Incidentally, the Church of Scotland, and other churches, do use the word 'debts/debtors' in their official versions of the Lord's Prayer.

Hugh quotes from the Book of Common Prayer and mentions the phrases 'miserable sinners' and 'there is no health in us', stating that this is a 'bleak' view of sin. Today, as the meaning of words continue to change, it is helpful to be reminded of the sixteenth and seventeenth century meanings of the two phrases. We are 'miserable' in the sense that we are in need of God's mercy and 'there is no health (in the sense of help) in us' because God is the source of all forgiveness.

In his article Hugh describes the word 'sin' as being 'very hard-line'. If we weaken our understanding of sin and its consequences, then we are in danger of downplaying the importance and significance of the crucifixion and the resurrection; they lie at the heart of our faith. As the Nicene Creed reminds us, Jesus was crucified, 'for our sake' and 'for our salvation'. Salvation is no small matter and the closer a person is to God, the deeper the understanding of his or her own sinfulness and need for salvation.

Paradoxically, the closer you are to God, the greater your awareness of the distance that separates you – the 'miserable sinner' – from God. It is only through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ that the distance has been bridged, that our sins have been and are forgiven, and that we are given new life.

*Ginny Thomas*

## **'Forgive us our trespasses' Part 2**

I ended my article on this subject in the last issue of *Clarion* by suggesting that, since the versions of the Lord's Prayer in the Gospels have different meanings, we should celebrate their diversity. There is more to it than that, because they all concur in the need to forgive and be forgiven; words that run through the Gospels like a golden thread, appearing on Jesus' lips three dozen times. When Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who had done him wrong, suggesting seven times, Jesus replied: 'Not seven times but seventy times seven' (Matthew 18:21,22). He taught that people must make peace with their brothers and sisters before they came to worship (Matthew 5:24). The risen Christ breathed on the disciples and said 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone their sins they are forgiven: if you do not forgive them they are retained (John 20:22,23). These are very strong words. The theme returns in the Acts of the Apostles and in many of the epistles. It is one of the most consistent teachings in the New Testament.

The days before Jesus' crucifixion are full of actions based on his own injunction 'to love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you' (Luke 6:27) and turn the other cheek. At the time of his arrest by the authorities, Jesus allows Judas to identify him by a kiss (Mark 14:44). Before Caiaphas, in the face of many false witnesses, he remains silent (Matthew 26:62,63). Before Pilate, so far from answering the charges brought against him, he merely turns back what Pilate himself has said: 'You say that I am a king... I have come to bear witness to the truth' (John 18:36,37). At Golgotha Jesus prays for those who are crucifying him: 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34).

Nor should we expect this process to be straightforward. Many people remain, understandably, unable to forgive those who have committed some act that has affected their lives deeply, such as killing or maiming loved ones. In a radio broadcast on Good Friday 2011, Archbishop Rowan Williams said: 'I think that the twentieth century saw such a level of atrocity that it focussed our minds very

hard on the dangers of forgiving too easily... because if forgiveness is easy it is as if suffering does not really matter'. Perhaps only those working in the area of restorative justice and reconciliation know just how hard this work of forgiving can be. We can also get things wrong if we parade our forgiveness in a sanctimonious way to gain the moral high ground over our adversary, or even to exact an apology. Forgiveness, as Jesus showed it, is a free gesture seeking no *quid pro quo* (Jane Shaw, *A practical Christianity*, SPCK, 2012. pp. 25-29).

Here is a piece by the American writer Helen Luke in her book *Old Age: Journey into Simplicity* (Parabola Books, 1987): 'It is the breakthrough of forgiveness, in its most profound sense – universal and particular, impersonal and personal – that alone brings the "letting go", the ultimate freedom of the spirit. For, in the moment of that realisation, every false guilt, whether seen as one's own or as other peoples', is gone forever – and the real guilt which each of us carries, of refusal to see, to be aware, is accepted. So we may look open-eyed at ourselves and the world and suffer the pain and joy of the divine conflict which is the human condition, the meaning of incarnation'.

"Forgive us... as we forgive..." we may say glibly for most of our lives, whether in these words or others, explicit or vague, with small understanding of the universality of this condition. It is no accident that Shakespeare's last three great plays – *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest* – are all centred on the final redeeming power of forgiveness. They are Shakespeare's own testimony to the meaning of his insights into the conflicts of good and evil, and, more profoundly, of good with good in the human soul. Forgiveness is not the comfortable, often somewhat superior 'I forgive you' that comes so easily to human lips when emotions have cooled. Things are then smoothed over but the resentment descends into the unconscious together with a hidden condition that the 'forgiven' injury shall not be repeated. The ultimate experience of forgiveness brings a change of heart, a *metanoia* of the spirit, after which every seeming injury, injustice, rejection, past, present or future, every so-called blow of fate, becomes, as it were, an essential note in the music of God, however discordant it may sound to our superficial hearing.

The experience excludes nothing, which means that in this moment of forgiveness all one's sins and weaknesses are included, being at the same time both remembered and known as the essential darkness that has revealed to us the light.

'Dante describes the experience of remorse and repentance in his confrontation with his shadow when at the threshold of the Earthly Paradise he meets Beatrice and she shows him the darkness in his life. All his sins are washed away and are forgotten in the river Lethe, but this indeed is not enough; it is not yet forgiveness. He must still drink the waters of Eunoë, the spring of true knowing from which two rivers flow into the world. After this all the darkness, the weakness and the sin is again remembered but experienced with joy as essential to his wholeness. Only then can he begin his last journey into the Paradiso towards the centre where the final unity will be revealed to him'. (pp. 45,46)

To end on a more practical note, a writer on ethics, FW Keene points out that, in all the New Testament examples (eg: the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave, Matt 18:21-35), the forgiver is either more powerful than, or at least the equal of, the person being forgiven. Keene believes that in order to reconcile forgiveness with justice, the powerful should relinquish their power in order to receive forgiveness. He gives the example of child sexual abuse: 'The forgiveness of the father by the daughter typically cannot occur until the power relationship has been reversed, when the daughter has reached adulthood and the father has reached old age.' This point of view may help to avoid pressuring victims of abuse to offer premature forgiveness on religious grounds.

In conclusion, we can have clarity about some aspects of forgiveness:

- Only God can forgive sin, although the church, in the name of the Father, has been given the Ministry of Reconciliation;
- Only the victim may forgive the wrongdoer; no other person may forgive on his or her behalf;

- Forgiveness of the person does not condone the evil act;
- Forgiveness benefits both the victim and the wrongdoer: the victim is freed from a life of bitterness, the wrongdoer from the burden of guilt.
- Forgiveness is not complete without reconciliation between victim and wrongdoer.
- All this is easy to write, but very hard to do.

*Hugh Beach*



### **Report from the PCC: Glass Half Full?**

At its meeting in November the PCC was mostly concerned with finance, although as usual the meeting started with a speed study of the Gospel for the following Sunday. The PCC heard that

there has been a good response to the Planned Giving Programme. The PCC is very grateful to all those people who have responded, including those who have simply responded that they are not able to make any change to their giving this year; a considered response to our Planned Giving programme is really helpful. The total received or committed so far from this year's programme currently amounts to £26,070 (excluding Giftaid). This should be enough in cash terms to replenish the cash reserves used up as a result of this year's anticipated deficit. The glass is only half full, however, in terms of the Budget for 2014, which was approved at the meeting. Despite efforts to maximise rents and contain costs, we are still budgeting for a deficit in 2014. If you come to St Mary's and have not already made a financial contribution, the PCC urges you to consider doing so. Contact the Parish Office for information needed to set up a regular gift by standing order, whether you prefer paper forms or want to do it online yourself.

On a separate subject, the PCC approved the charities that will be supported from our charity fund raising activities in 2014. We will continue to support Medic Malawi for the next

two years with one third of the funds we raise in each year and in 2014, the next third of the total will be shared in smaller amounts between two small UK charities working in Sudan: Children of Sudan and Together for Sudan; The Bishop Mubarak Fund, support for Alex, the student in Uganda sponsored by the Sunday School, the UR4Driving project of the Upper Room St Saviour's Charity and FANY, the Princess Royal's Volunteer Corps. As previously decided, the other principal charity that we will support in 2014 will be St Luke's Redcliffe Gardens Food Bank, which will receive one third of the total raised next year.

*Leo Fraser-Mackenzie*



### **Passes for St Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey**

We have four free passes to get FREE entry into St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.

If you would like to pick up the tickets please call or e-mail John at the parish office.

### **Thursday Lunch Meeting Report of 14 November**

Simon de Mare gave a fascinating talk about Egypt at this lunch, hosted by Ann Mulcare in Ginny's absence, taking the group 'at a brief canter' through more than twelve thousand years of history of a country that has seen enormous changes. I attempt below to catch his main themes.

His story started as the ice age retreated and the grass lands became parched, leaving 90% of the land as desert. People settled along the river Nile, the sunny weather allowing three crops each year. The first permanent settlements dated from four thousand BCE.

Thirty one Dynasties followed up to 30 BCE. From 2,647 BCE Pyramids were built. The first was the Step Pyramid at Saqqara, south of Cairo, being the first example of the use of dressed stone. The Great Pyramids of Giza followed, one the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, built for Pharaohs. The Sphinx

is the world's oldest known monumental sculpture and the largest monolithic structure. The Avebury Henge in Wiltshire was built at the same time; Stonehenge still another two hundred years in the future, in about 2,300 BCE. On a clear day one can see the Pyramids from downtown Cairo, the distance being equivalent to Hampstead Heath or Crystal Palace. When Julius Caesar saw them with Cleopatra they were as old to him as he is to us.

Simon commented that biblical stories emerge from about 2,000 BCE. Abraham is said to have visited Egypt. The Genesis story of Joseph, son of Jacob, recounts his rise from slavery to vizier status, establishing the Pyramids as granaries for grain storage and distribution. During a famine he arranged for his family, the Hebrews, to settle in Goshen where they stayed until the Exodus.

At this time domesticated cats were first recorded. The first Obelisk was erected in 1,950 BCE. Twenty-six standing Egyptian obelisks remain around the world, including Cleopatra's Needle, which came to the Embankment in 1879.

From about 1,700 the Hyksos invaded from western Asia, introducing to Egypt the horse and carriage. In about 1,540 Egypt's power was restored, and in five centuries they created most of the major monuments we associate with Egypt, such as Tutankhamun's Treasures in the Valley of the Kings. His father introduced the idea of monotheism, and Ramesses II reigned for sixty six years, making major additions to the Temples of Luxor, Karnak and Abu Simbel. His massive head is in the British Museum. Dinner parties took place on his father's sarcophagus, now in the Sir John Soane Museum in Holborn.

Simon showed that this was the time of Moses and the Exodus. Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter in a 'Moses' basket by the Nile, a place now marked with a small Coptic church. Later, he encountered God in a burning bush, which can still be seen in St Catherine's Monastery. After the ten plagues he led the Israelites out of Egypt, dividing the Red – actually Reed – Sea in the process, and into the promised land.

The period from 1,069 to 332 BCE was disturbed. From the Old Testament, Simon referred to King David, his son King Solomon, and Jeroboam. After 715 BCE there was a series of invasions by the Nubians from the south, by the Assyrians, by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar (who destroyed Jerusalem and took the Hebrews into captivity), and by the Persians. One army was swallowed up in the western desert, still attracting treasure hunters.



All changed when the Macedonian Greek Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BCE, creating a vast empire spreading as far as India. The Ptolemaic Dynasty that followed was the Golden Age. The mathematical 'Pi' was invented and the earth's

circumference was calculated. The Pharos lighthouse in Alexandria became another of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, 450 feet high (the Gherkin is 590 feet). The last ruler of this dynasty was Cleopatra, whose defeat established the Roman Era from 30 BCE to 395 CE. Egypt became the bread basket for the Roman Empire.

During this period the Flight into Egypt took place, the Holy Family fleeing from King Herod's threat to kill all first born sons. Simon reported that there is still an old sycamore tree in Cairo under which the Virgin Mary is said to have sheltered. The Coptic Orthodox Church, founded by St Mark in 42 CE, is the oldest Christian church, launching the Christian Monastic tradition, the Desert Fathers. Then, under Emperor Constantine (306 – 337 CE) Egypt became part of the Byzantine Empire. All changed again with the conquest of Egypt in 642 by the Arab Muslims. Throughout the Muslim period the Coptic Christians were tolerated, and there are still 10-14 million of them, nearly 15% of the population, in Egypt. The Sultans made Cairo the 'City of a Thousand Minarets' and created major Islamic monuments. Hassan built his mosque about the same time as Westminster Abbey was constructed. This was the Islamic Golden Age, developing classical learning while Europe was in the dark ages.

In 1517 the Ottoman Turks invaded, but left Egypt relatively undisturbed for nearly three hundred years. Since then there have been major changes, which continue up to today. In 1796 Napoleon defeated the Ottomans at the Battle of the Pyramids, introducing Napoleonic Law and land reforms. Not for long, though, as in 1798 Nelson defeated the French at the Battle of the Nile, taking the Rosetta Stone, which now holds centre stage in the British Museum. An Albanian, Mohammed Ali, set up a dynasty with British involvement, bringing many western ideas into Egypt, improving agriculture and introducing industry. The Suez Canal was opened in 1869, celebrated by Verdi's opera, Aida. In 1882 the British formed a Protectorate. In 1922 independence was granted under King Fuad, who was followed by his dissolute son King Farouk. In 1952 the military overthrew him, sending him to the South of France on a boat with his money. Anywhere else he would have been killed!

Bewildering changes continued with the British attempt to reclaim the Suez Canal in 1956, two wars against Israel, the Camp David peace treaty signed in 1978, the Russians gaining much influence until thrown out by President Sadat, who was himself assassinated. Mubarak governed until overthrown by popular pressure in 2011. Mohammed Morsi was elected President in 2012, the first Democracy there in 5,000 years. His policies were taken over by extremist Salafi members of the Muslim Brotherhood, and the army arrested him. There is now a dangerous situation with uncertain outcome.

However, Simon ended optimistically. Having experienced about 390 rulers, he was sure that Egypt will continue as long as the River Nile flows along the 600 miles of its territory.

*Arthur Tait*



### **Sponsor a bench**

The benches in the gardens are looking sad and tired and need refurbishment. If you would like to sponsor the restoration of the benches please contact the Parish Office.



## Reflections from a pilgrim to the Holy Land

The Oxford English dictionary definition of a pilgrim is 'a person who journeys to a place for religious reasons'. Yet according to the old adage, travel broadens the mind. For me,

these two sit uneasily together. Could it be that a carefree traveller with no set purpose would end up with a richer experience than a pilgrim travelling to a place with a set purpose, arising from religious expectations, whatever form these might take? At a meeting a few weeks before our departure, the group from St. Mary's and St. Luke's Chelsea and their friends met to prepare for the trip. We were invited to share our motivations for and expectations of the forthcoming trip. I was only able to say that I hoped to travel with an open mind. Perhaps this was an easy way out, but equally it was possibly a dangerous course to take, for an open mind exposed to new experiences is open to emotional responses.

The first emotional, rather than entirely rational response, was fear, or at least apprehension: a concern about travelling to Israel when news of the war in Syria was so bad, and apprehension about effects on personal faith from actually seeing the holy places so long imagined or experienced through other media. Apprehension was present throughout the trip. It was present at the unexpectedly arduous tour of the underground water system in the ancient City of David. We descended (or more accurately slipped and slithered down) the damp shafts carved through rock, and then wound our way through narrow tunnels, all below the surface of the ground. Despite forewarning, there was also a slight air of apprehension when the armed guards boarded the bus on the way back from Bethlehem into Jerusalem. Who was not alarmed by the ascent of Mount Tabor, said to be the site of the Transfiguration, more than 660 metres above the plain of lower Galilee? We had to swap our comfortable coach for smaller minibuses as the road to the summit

was not passable for the larger vehicles, and indeed it seemed incredible that even the minibuses were able to make it to the top of the multiple vertiginous hairpin bends. There was slight apprehension again when we faced individual questioning as we went through security on departure from Israel.

Apprehension can sometimes be displaced by anger or disgust. Such was my reaction to seeing the so-called security separation wall that divides Israel and the Palestinian Territories, or when we learnt that crystal-clear waters of the source of the river Jordan have been almost wholly diverted to the southern parts of Israel, with the result that the river is but a shadow of itself and parts of the Palestinian territory only have water a few days each week, not to mention the effect on the Dead Sea. Such things should not have been a surprise, but seeing them for the first time and feeling them made all the difference; perhaps I should have more sympathy for the Apostle Thomas in future. Fear was also tinged with anger and disgust at being caught up in a surge of pilgrims inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and crushed (far more tightly than the worst rush hour crush on the Tube) and wholly unable to move for more than 20 minutes during an unscheduled procession by one of the guardian organisations of the Holy Sepulchre. At this site, anger and disgust were tinged with sadness that the Ethiopian monks were turned out of the church of the Holy Sepulchre and have occupied a space on the roof for the last 100 years or so.

There was an underlying sadness, too, arising from the effect that so many visitors have on the holy places: the Holy Sepulchre and the Grotto of the Nativity are in poor physical condition and sheer numbers of visitors makes them hard to access. The relatively poor condition of the holiest places was in marked contrast to many of the buildings associated with other places and events described in the New Testament. Many such buildings were constructed in the twentieth century over much earlier buildings. These newer places cater far better for the volume of pilgrims: most have many places specifically designated for worship outside with all-weather altars and seating. At such sites it was at first surprising to

hear worship being offered in so many places and in so many languages at the same time, but sheer weight of numbers makes this inevitable. There was sadness, too, that at most sites even where silence was requested and sometimes there were monks attempting to impose it, there was the chatter of excited pilgrim tourists. More than once the vision of Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers in the Temple came to mind. Patience and tolerance are essential when on pilgrimage in the Holy Land.

There were many moments to treasure, too, for better reasons: surprise at the relatively easy and open access to the Western Wall, where Jews and Gentiles alike can pray. Access to the Dome of the Rock was very different. For non-Moslems it meant queuing at a single access point and going through tight security, whereas Moslems were free to come and go without restriction through any of the other gates, where security existed but was unobtrusive. What beauty there was in the open spaces around the Dome of the Rock, in marked contrast to the thronging crowds in the narrow streets of Old Jerusalem as Moslem families made preparations for Eid ul Adha, one of their major festivals.

There were many emotional high points of the journey. One such was a visit to the Jeel Al Jemal Boys Home in Bethany, barely a day's walk over the Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, yet in a different world altogether. It provides a home for 90 boys, as well as running a primary school for 350 local children. Another memorable event was a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre early on Sunday morning, well before the crowds had arrived, when there was at last space for quieter, personal reflection. There was silence, too, in the Judean wilderness. We stopped to celebrate Holy Communion on the road to Jericho. Yes, it was at one of the purpose built worship sites, so we sat on a raised stone semi-circle, but the altar was a simple table brought by the local Bedouin man. At the point when our service was starting, it felt as if the man was staying rather too long, laying out the tourist goods he hoped to sell us, their cellophane wrapping breaking the silence as he moved them about. Then he

felt the silence too and stopped, and the young boy helping him tiptoed over the rocks.

So much for the emotional response to individual events and sights. A more considered response after returning home brings me to a different conclusion. There is still anger about some of the things we saw, but it is tempered by the realisation that there is much that this unequal and unfair in our own society. There is renewed respect for those who can get on with life cheek by jowl with others whose outlook and beliefs are poles apart from their own. There was something hugely important, too, in going to the land where Jesus was born and lived and taught, that has kindled in me a reconnection with his person, and made me realise that perhaps I have somewhat overlooked him in recent years as an equal part of the Trinity. The Grotto of the Nativity? Well, reasoned reflection leads me to the conclusion that it is not inappropriate that it should be lit by bare light bulbs hanging at a crazy angle. Is this not how many people in the world live today, and is this not where Jesus would be born today?

*Leo Fraser-Mackenzie*



### **Milk cartons, elephants and Christmas trees**

What you need is:

A washed and clean plastic 2 pint milk plastic 'bottle', or a bigger one, as long as the handle is in the middle of one side rather than on the corner.

A pair of scissors

A meat skewer (or similar)

A piece of narrow ribbon about 8" long

Paints or glue and decorations

A sense of the ridiculous.

Firstly, (the easy part), unscrew the lid, using the skewer to punch a hole downwards through the middle of the lid (there is usually a dimple).

Fold the ribbon in half and knot it and then thread it upwards through the lid. The lid is now your howdah and hanger.

Secondly, cut the bottom of the handle and using that hole as a guide, cut the container in half vertically.

The handle is now the trunk. Cut away the centre sections about half way up of the face, behind the handle (can be tricky) and the faces of each side. On the back face, remember to cut a tail. Don't worry if you forget as you can always make another hole and put some ribbon through it to make a tail.

Carefully cut big round elephant ear-shaped flaps in the sides of the container near the top of the handle and bend them forward to make the elephant's ears.

Put the lid back on to your elephant, decorate it as you see fit, and then stand back and smile.

Don't forget the following:

Q: Why did the elephant paint the soles of its feet yellow?

A: So it could float upside down in custard

Q: Why did the elephant paint its toenails red?

A: So it could hide in a cherry tree.

Happy Christmas!

*Katrina Quinton*

## **December and January's Year's Mind**

Ethel Doris  
Angela Raynor  
Margaret Payne  
Alexandra English  
Antony Gowan  
Patricia Coghill  
Harry Dwight  
Kathleen Mundy  
David Lidderdale  
Victoire Ridsdale  
George Priest  
Jacqueline Lewis  
Edward Sloane  
Doris Stone  
Charles Foster-Taylor  
Georgina Davson  
Ethel Sutcliffe  
Beatrice Spicer  
Basil Robinson  
Albert Beauchamp  
Alice Wood  
Keith Kerry  
Timothy Pringle  
Elizabeth Graham  
Anstice Goodman  
Tilly Halliwell  
Mary Millbourn  
Dorian Chinner  
Clarissa Morse  
Frances Perry  
Noel Patrick  
Leonard Waight  
Emily Greenland  
Francis Mundy  
Margot Macpherson  
Francis Spicer  
Anthony Glynn  
Alexander Fleming  
Harry Dwight  
Ffreebairn Simpson  
Violet Berry  
Joan Ommanney  
Jane Hawker  
Ellen Payne

## **SUNDAY SERVICES**

8.00am Eucharist, 10.30am Sung Eucharist  
*The meeting room at the back of the church is available for people with pre-school children.  
There is a baby changing facility in the wheelchair accessible toilet in the hall.*

Handel's Messiah

Saturday 14 December 7.30pm

St Paul's Church, Wilton Place

Knightsbridge

Tickets £15 on the door or £13 in advance  
from Oriel Robinson via the parish office.

## WEEKDAY SERVICES

Usually Morning Prayer is said daily at 8.30am (Eucharist on Feastdays); except Public Holidays.  
Wednesday 7.00pm Eucharist

## Readings in December 2013

### Sunday 1 December First Sunday of

#### Advent

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 2. 1-5;*  
*Romans 13. 11-end;*  
*Matthew 24. 36-44*

Wednesday 4 Eucharist with prayers for healing

Readings at 7.00pm *Isaiah 25. 6-10a;*  
*Matthew 15. 29-37*

### Sunday 8 All Age Worship with Nativity Play

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 11. 1-10;*  
*Matthew 3. 1-12*

Wednesday 11 Eucharist

Readings at 7.00pm *Isaiah 40. 25-end;*  
*Matthew 11. 28-end*

Thursday 12 Eucharist

*Isaiah 41. 13-20*  
*Matthew 11. 11-15*

### Sunday 15 Third Sunday of Advent

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 35. 1-10;*  
*James 5. 7-10;*  
*Matthew 11. 2-11*

Wednesday 18 Eucharist

Readings at 7.00pm *Jeremiah 23. 5-8;*  
*Matthew 1. 18-24*

### Sunday 22 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 7. 10-16;*  
*Romans 1. 1-7;*  
*Matthew 1. 18-end*

### Tuesday 24 Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service  
11.30pm Midnight Mass *Isaiah 52.7-10*  
*Hebrews 1.1-4*  
*John 1.1-14*

### Wednesday 25 Christmas Day

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 9.2-7*  
*Luke 2.1-14*

### Sunday 29 First Sunday of Christmas

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 63. 7-9;*  
*Hebrews 2. 10-end;*  
*Matthew 2. 13-end*

## Readings in January 2014

Wednesday 1 No Eucharist

### Sunday 5 The Epiphany

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 60. 1-6;*  
*Ephesians 3. 1-12;*  
*Matthew 2. 1-12*

Wednesday 8 Eucharist with prayers for healing

Readings at 7.00pm *1 John 4. 11-18;*  
*Mark 6. 45-52*

### Sunday 12 The Baptism of Christ

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 42. 1-9;*  
*Acts 10. 34-43;*  
*Matthew 3. 13-end*

Wednesday 15 Eucharist

Readings at 7.00pm *1 Samuel 3. 1-10, 19-20;*  
*Mark 1. 29-39*

### Sunday 19 Second Sunday of Epiphany

Readings at 10.30am *Isaiah 49. 1-7;*  
*1 Corinthians 1. 1-9 ;*  
*John 1. 29-42*

Wednesday 22 Vincent of Saragossa

Readings at 7.00pm *1 Samuel 17. 32-33, 37,*  
*40-51;*  
*Mark 3. 1-6*

### Sunday 26 Third Sunday of Epiphany

Readings at 10.30am *1 Corinthians 1. 10-18;*  
*Matthew 4. 12-23*

Wednesday 29 Eucharist

Readings at 7.00pm *2 Samuel 7. 4-17;*  
*Mark 4. 1-20*

### Sunday 2 February Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

Readings at 10.30am *Malachi 3. 1-5;*  
*Hebrews 2. 14-end;*  
*Luke 2. 22-40*

## Upcoming in December 2013

Sunday 1 Parish Lunch  
2.00pm Baptism of William Hellin

Thursday 5 7.30pm Taize Service

Sunday 8 10.30pm All Age Worship with Nativity Play  
7.00pm Carol Service

Thursday 12 12.30pm Thursday Lunch

Saturday 14 4.00pm Wedding of Anna Crystal and Luke Townsend

Sunday 15 1.00pm Baptism of Viola Parr  
3.00pm Baptism of Shaw

Thursday 19 11.00am Home communion  
St Teresa's

Friday 20 9.00am Bousfield Assembly

Saturday 21 11.00am Baptism of Eloise Ellis  
2.00pm Wedding of  
Jessica Webber & Mark Hopkins  
Sunday 22 2.30pm Baptism of Alice &  
George Daley & Alfred Gibb

### Upcoming in January 2014

Sunday 5 Baptism of Montgomery,  
Georgina and Gary Cooper  
Wednesday 8 10.30am Bible Study  
Monday 13 7.00pm Bible Study  
Wednesday 22 10.30am Bible Study  
Thursday 23 7.45pm PCC Meeting  
Sunday 26 10.30am Baptism of Leya  
Crutcheley  
Monday 27 7.00pm Bible Study

### Parish Office

St Mary's Church House, The Boltons, London  
SW10 9TB Tel 020 7835 1440

[www.stmarytheboltons.org.uk](http://www.stmarytheboltons.org.uk)

**Vicar** The Revd Ginny Thomas  
020 7835 1440, mobile 07590074951.

Day off: Tuesday

[ginny@stmarytheboltons.org.uk](mailto:ginny@stmarytheboltons.org.uk)

**Director of Music** John Ward  
07853 406050 (mobile)  
[boltonsmusic@gmail.com](mailto:boltonsmusic@gmail.com)

#### Parish Administrator

John McVeigh 020 7835 1440 (church office)

Mon to Fri 9.15am-2.15pm

[john@stmarytheboltons.org.uk](mailto:john@stmarytheboltons.org.uk)

**Verger / Caretaker** David Ireton  
020 7244 8998 / 07881 865386

Day off: Tuesday

#### Churchwardens

Leo Fraser-Mackenzie 020 7384 3246

Ann Mulcare 020 7937 2005

#### Members of the Parochial

##### Church Council

Revd Ginny Thomas (Chair)

Mr Philip Bedford-Smith

Mr Craig Drake

Mr Leo Fraser-Mackenzie

Miss Margarete Geier

(Deanery Synod Representative),

Mrs Mary Godwin

Miss Joanna Hackett (PCC Secretary)

Mr Timon Molloy

Mrs Ann Mulcare (Deanery Synod  
representative)

Mr David Parsons

Mrs Katrina Quinton

Mrs Judy Rydell

Mrs Ann Tait

### Safeguarding Officer

The St Mary The Boltons' Safeguarding Officer is Timon Molloy. His role is to help us to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk. He is the first point of contact for children, adults at risk and other members of the congregation regarding suspicions of abuse and other safeguarding concerns. If you have any concerns, please contact Timon on: [07816 184207](tel:07816184207)

### Children's' Champion

The St Mary The Boltons' Children's Champions are Chris and Katie Fowkes. Their role is to ensure that the voices and needs of the children and young people are heard and reflected in parish life. They can be contacted via: [Katie.Fowkes@talktalk.net](mailto:Katie.Fowkes@talktalk.net) / [07810 831505](tel:07810831505)

**Treasurer** Carolyn Stubbs 020 7835 0074

#### Assistant Treasurer

Bill Gallagher 020 7384 3246.

**Electoral Roll Officer** Fiona Parsons

#### Gift Aid Secretary

John Barker 020 8571 0737

#### Co-ordinators:

##### Monday Bible Study Group

Pat Schleger 020 7589 2359

##### Wednesday Bible Study Group

Margarete Geier 020 7373 1639

##### Clarion Editor

Verena Tschudin 020 7351 1263

**Flowers** Margarete Geier & Katrina Quinton

##### 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 020 8788 9744

##### Thursday monthly lunch

Ann Tait 020 7352 5127

##### Social Secretary

Margarete Geier 020 7373 1639

##### Sunday School Parish Office

**Contributions for the February Clarion  
should be sent in to the church office by  
24 January 2014**

*The PCC of St. Mary with St Peter & St. Jude, West Brompton is a  
Registered Charity, No 1133073*