



"You're an angel" said the elderly woman, getting out of the car. "What do you think an angel is?" I wanted to ask her. . . . "Do you really think they exist? . . ." There are hundreds of paintings of them in art galleries and they flood Christmas cards, depicted as humans with wings or chubby cherubs.

At the end of this month we celebrate Michaelmas - the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels. There was supposedly a war in heaven: Michael, with the aid of angels, fought against the dragon who was the Devil. The devil was cast out into the earth with his angels- the demons!

So what or who do we think angels are? The word 'angel' comes from the Greek word for messenger and the Bible contains innumerable references to them as spiritual beings who are a constant presence in the world, mediating between God and humanity.

Belief in angels became strong among the Jewish people during their exile in Babylon around the year 600 BC and so they are mentioned a good deal in the Old Testament. One of the most famous accounts is that of Jacob's ladder when Jacob dreams he is at the foot of a stairway rising from earth to heaven. He awakes and says "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it". He sees a stairway and the gulf between earth and heaven is bridged by angels. Jacob senses God's presence even though He has no voice, no visible shape, no face.

There is another particularly lovely account in the book of Tobit about the angel Raphael (the name actually means "God heals"). Raphael works in opposition to Asmodeus - an evil spirit who tries to conspire against newlyweds and prevent them making love! Raphael - of course - defeats him. However, he does play more fundamental roles in the account signifying that God is always with His people, in their suffering and their fear, in their homes and on their travels. God sends His angel to defeat evil, to heal, to guard and guide.

Jesus appears to be surrounded by angels at the most important times of His life. The climax of their work is their involvement in the beginning and ending of His life on earth. They announce His incarnation and His birth, they minister to Him in the desert, strengthen Him in His agony at Gethsemane and are the first witnesses of His resurrection. In the final book of the New Testament, Revelation, their worship in heaven is an example of how our worship should be in church.

Christians have cited the saying of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel as the basis for the

belief in a personal angel for each one of us. He is talking about forgiveness while a child is near Him and says "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones for I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven". French peasants up to the 19th century had a lovely greeting which said "Good day to you and your companion": they certainly believed we all had the presence of companion spirits.

The personal ministry of guardian angels is an extension of the deep mystery of our personal relationship with God. The 14th century theologian, Nicholas Cabasilas, said "We pray for a guardian angel, not that one may be given to us, since each of us has one from the moment of birth, but that it may be active and may fulfil its task, that it may protect us, and lead us in the right way and may not, angered by our sins, desert us".

It's all too easy for us to see the traditions of the Christian faith and practice as fixed and to try and find the living Christ only in static images, rather than in each particular moment of life. Perhaps, therefore, we should not look for angels only in texts and pictures, in poetry and Christmas cards but look for them too among the living, recalling the verse in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it".

Freda Evans



OBERAMMERGAU 2000

In 1633, the village of Oberammergau in southern Germany was devastated by the Black Death. In their distress, the villagers made a vow to perform a play "about the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ". It is said that from that day no more people in the village died from the plague.

The first Passion Play was performed in 1634. In 1680, the performance was moved to the first year of each decade and it has been performed every ten years since then except for 1770 (when the staging of passion plays in any form was forbidden) and 1940 because of the war. There were also additional performances in 1934 and 1984 to mark the 300th and 350th anniversaries of the first performance. We have just returned from seeing this year's play, the 40th in this 360-year-old tradition. The text and music have been revised and new sets built for this millennium production and it

has been completely re-costumed. There are five performances a week from May to October and over half a million visitors are expected.



The play is performed in an impressive theatre which holds over 4700. Although the audience is under cover, the stage is open to the sky with trees and bushes forming a natural backdrop. The performance takes place whatever the weather and lasts all day; three hours in the morning, a three hour lunch-break and a further

three hours in the afternoon. The sheer scale of the production is amazing. This year, 1600 adults and 550 children, almost half the population of the village, are involved in the play. It opens with the entry into Jerusalem, with a crowd of 1500 people plus sheep, goats and donkeys. Much later, when the same crowd is shouting for Jesus to be crucified one has to ask, "Would I have recognised Him for who He was, or would I have been one of the traditionalists turning against Him?"

The scenes are linked by a narrator and a chorus and each is preceded by a "living picture" depicting a related story from the Old Testament; for example, the Last Supper is preceded by a representation of the Paschal Meal before the Exodus from Egypt. In these tableaux, the actors are completely motionless, giving the impression of a painting. So there is continual contrast, with pauses for reflection between each piece of the action.

No microphones, make-up or wigs are used and during the long lunch interval long-haired, bearded men can be seen going about their ordinary jobs; serving in shops or behind the bar or delivering the post. The entire village is involved in accommodating, feeding and transporting the audience so it is an enormous community undertaking. Behind the theatre, there was also a very modern interpretation of the 14 Stations of the Cross, quite unlike the usual representations.

Despite the length of the production, and the fact that it was all in German, the attention of the audience was held throughout. Seen purely as a theatrical performance, it would be an incredible experience, but it was much more than that. The events of Holy Week are brought to life so forcefully that you cannot fail to be moved and to understand the reality of the crucifixion and the resurrection.

Susan Horner



NEWS FROM THE TWICKENHAM AND RICHMOND UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION

In the interests of accuracy, the United Nations Association recently decided to describe all its non-individual members in the UK as affiliated rather than corporate members. St. James's Church is now therefore an affiliated, not a corporate, member of the United Nations Association.

Please note the following two UNA events for your personal diaries:

Friday, 29th September at 7.30p.m. at the Vestry House, Richmond, the Annual General Meeting of the Twickenham and Richmond Branch of the United Nations Association. Bruce Kent, the well-known peace campaigner, will speak on the culture of peace today.

Sunday, 22nd October at 10.30a.m. at the United Reform Church, Twickenham, the civic service of the Twickenham and Richmond Branch of the United Nations Association.

Margaret Hobbs



THE HARRY POTTER BOOKS

Some adults don't approve of the Harry Potter stories because they are about wizards and witches. They have obviously never read them! Children can tell the difference between fantasy and real life.

It is best to read the books in order starting with 'Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone'. Harry is a trainee wizard who gets into lots of trouble but for all the best reasons.

My Mum loves these books too and while she was reading the latest one we had to live on convenience foods for a few days because she couldn't put the book down!

I am just over half way through the fourth book (636 pages). After reading 'Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire' you may never eat another custard cream!

Jennifer Greville-Giddings

Age 9

MILLENNIUM CHRISTMAS BAZAAR - SATURDAY 18TH NOVEMBER

Please join us for discussions about the Bazaar at 143 Burtons Road on Monday 11th September at 8p.m. or telephone 8979 3654 with ideas or offers of help. Boxes will appear in church in October for contributions of items for various stalls. Thank you.

CHILDREN'S SOCIETY BOXES

We have sent off to the Children's Society a cheque for £403-00, the money from 24 Children Society boxes for the year 1999-2000. We would like to thank those whose "loose change" contributed such a worthwhile sum to this charity. Would you miss 5 pence per day from your change going into a box? This, the average of our current box holders, would provide over £18 each year. At this rate another 6 Boxholders would increase our giving to over £500 each year. If you would like to contribute to a very worthwhile cause in such a painless way please contact Pip or Anne Rowett at Church or ring on 8892 4736.

Pip & Anne Rowett



CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP

(Ages 4 - 11)

SATURDAY, 16TH SEPTEMBER

10.30A.M. - 1.00P.M.

IN THE CHURCH HALL

PREPARATION FOR HARVEST

If you are interested in coming,
please sign the clipboard at the back of the church
or contact Freda on 020 8941 4424
so we can plan the catering and activities.



**Hampton
Hill Playhouse**

90 High Street, Hampton Hill, TW12 1NY

CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to the Teddington Theatre Club on completing their first year at the new Hampton Hill Playhouse in the High Street. They have recently published their First Operating Report, and it makes very impressive reading. Apart from an ambitious and diverse artistic programme which has included Alan Ayckbourn's *How the Other Half Loves*, Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and Noel Coward's *Relative Values*, the Playhouse itself has become a remarkable local centre of cultural activities and many other contrasting events. The average attendance at the theatre is now 80% of a full house, and the premises have also been successfully hired so that there have been few days in the past year when something hasn't been going on at the Playhouse.

Teddington Theatre Club and its affiliated groups - the Youth Action Theatre and the Children's Theatre - have benefited from the superb up to date facilities which are on a par with those of provincial theatres. At least five other local amateur drama groups have also staged productions, as well as several dance companies, an orchestra, a choral society and professional performers such as Prunella Scales, Timothy West and Virginia McKenna. The building itself has been hired for art exhibitions, family celebrations, meetings, conferences and sales promotions.

We are indeed fortunate to have such a facility in our midst, which all in our community can use and enjoy. Membership of the Teddington Theatre Club is open to everyone, whether you wish to act, work backstage or just sit in the audience. Contact Sue Bell, the Membership Secretary on 8287 2663.

ttc TEDDINGTON
THEATRE CLUB

A PARISH OPEN MEETING
to discuss and explore
COMMON WORSHIP

Saturday 14th October 2000
9.30a.m. to 1.00p.m. in the Church Hall
followed by a simple lunch

Don't miss this golden opportunity to
take part in planning our new forms of worship



WOMEN'S FORUM
QUESTION TIME



Wednesday 20th September at 7.30p.m.
in the Hall

Rev Brian Leathard in the Chair

Panellists:

Deirdre Curran - Hampton and Hampton Hill VCG
Bill Jerman - Headteacher at Hampton Hill Junior School
Rev Simon Lane - Vicar of The Good Shepherd Church, Hounslow
Lesley Mortimer - Single Regeneration Budget Manager
with Westminster City Council

THIS MEETING IS OPEN TO ALL

Questions to be submitted to the Committee early in September.
Forms will be available in Church on Sunday 3rd September.

ST. JAMES'S WEBSITE



Don't forget that you can now also read *The Spire* on our church website, which was launched by Bishop Michael on St. James's Day at the end of July. For a step by step 'idiot guide' to accessing the website through www.hampton-online.co.uk, contact Prill Hinckley on 020 8979 0528 or p.m.hinckley@blueyonder.co.uk.

GUIDE NEWS

3rd Hampton Hill Guides have just completed their second year. Summer term activities included our annual fundraiser with the Brownies, a day camp at Heyswood and an activity day at Blacklands where the Guides tried out haymaking, abseiling and team building activities.

We also recently spent a weekend camping at Walton. As part of the closing ceremony, the Guides said what they had enjoyed most about camp, which included falling in the water on the obstacle course; the sports, especially the tug of war; living in the great outdoors; sleeping in a tent; cooking and eating, and midnight feasts.

I enjoyed watching the girls working together as a team; seeing them support each other through difficult times, and enabling them to have fun together!

In September we shall be welcoming several Brownies who will be moving up to join us. Our increasing numbers make our need for adult help even more urgent. Please help us if you can.

Sue Blay



STOP PRESS

**RNLI Bonanza Quiz
Friday 22nd October**

More next issue

Ring Jill on 8287 7438



August, being the holiday month, has unsurprisingly been quiet as far as this page is concerned! We hope you are now all refreshed from your time away. As the new academic year begins, we particularly remember in our prayers all our children and young people who are beginning school, starting at new schools, or going away for the first time to college or university.

At the end of July some members of our choir joined St. Francis de Sales' choir in a concert held at their church. The music varied, ranging from Monteverdi to Bach, and the saxophone in "O Salutaris Hostia" was especially compelling.

On the subject of music, we are delighted that our organist, Geoffrey Bowyer, was invited to conduct the band at Kneller Hall earlier in the Summer. It was the first time that Geoffrey had conducted at the Military School of Music.

Margaret and David Taylor have moved from Oxford Road, Teddington to 57 Nightingale Road, Hampton. Their new telephone number is 8979 3961.

Two of our parishioners have been in hospital undergoing surgery during August - Janet Jeffries and Eila Severn. By the time this is printed we hope that they will both be well on the road to recovery. We send them our love and best wishes and look forward to seeing them back in Church soon, amongst us all.



**SEPTEMBER 29TH
MICHAELMAS**

Michaelmas gets its name from St. Michael who wasn't really a saint but an angel. You can read about him in the bible (Revelation, chapter 12, starting at verse 7). St. Michael is thought of as the protector of people fighting against evil and he is one of the patron saints of soldiers. He is often linked with St. George because they both fought dragons.

BACK TO SCHOOL

Can you find all these words to do with going back to school? The words go every way: up, down, backwards, forwards, diagonally.

S	C	H	O	O	L	D	I	N	N	E	R	S	P
E	G	P	G	S	C	H	O	S	H	T	A	M	E
X	C	E	H	M	K	R	O	W	L	A	T	E	M
E	H	P	O	Y	O	R	T	S	I	H	C	F	A
R	E	P	E	G	S	B	E	R	U	L	E	R	D
C	M	R	N	C	R	I	I	P	H	M	Y	E	R
I	I	E	G	A	H	A	N	O	O	F	R	N	A
S	S	H	L	Y	B	I	P	O	L	E	E	C	O
E	T	C	I	L	M	K	R	H	G	O	N	H	B
O	Y	E	H	E	S	K	D	S	H	A	H	Y	C
O	U	T	D	A	R	T	C	H	A	L	K	S	A
K	C	E	L	P	H	Y	S	I	C	S	E	R	L
S	H	C	O	N	O	I	T	N	E	T	E	D	B

physics, ruler, school dinners, teacher.

Art, blackboard, biology, CDT, chalk, chemistry, classroom, desk, detention, english, exercise book, french, geography, gym, history, maths, metalwork, PE,

FROM THE JULY REGISTERS

Baptisms

- 2 Miles Alistair Upton, 4 Cramner Court
9 Frances Elizabeth Honders Beaumont, 18 Wellington Road
16 Olivia Marsh-Evans, 68 Hampton Road, Teddington
Morgan Marsh-Evans
Isabella Imogen Stewart Mills, 233 High Street, Hampton Hill
Alice Hartland-Ord, 55 Warwick Road, Twickenham
23 Alexandra Isabelle Michaela Grant, 14 Edward Road

Weddings

- 7 Matthew Jackson and Samantha Zimmer
15 Marcus O'Reilly and Natasha Jones

Funerals

- 3 Vera Cook, 22 Hylton Lodge, Hersham 80
13 Christopher Foster, 13 Carlisle Road, Hampton 78

WHAT thoughtful rich people call
the problem of poverty, thoughtful
poor people call, with equal justice,
the problem of riches.

R.H. TAWNEY

DATES TO NOTE SEPTEMBER

- 2 The Martyrs of Papua New Guinea, 1901 and 1942
3 Gregory the Great, Bishop of Rome, Teacher, 604
6 2.30p.m. **Women's Forum Annual Service in the Church Hall
followed by tea**
11 8p.m. **Bazaar Planning Meeting at Wendy Baker's - 143 Burtons Rd**
13 8p.m. **Meeting of the PCC - Church Hall**
14 Holy Cross, Day
16 10.30a.m. **Children's Workshop for Harvest, Church Hall**
17 Hildegard, Abbess of Bingen, 1179
20 7.30p.m. **Women's Forum Question Time with guest panel -
Church Hall**
21 Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist
24 3.30p.m. **Annual Baptismal Tea Party in the Hall for all who have been
baptised in the last year, and their families.**
25 Lancelot Andrews, Bishop of Winchester, Spiritual Writer, 1626
27 Vincent de Paul, 1660
29 Michael and All Angels
30 Jerome, Translator of the Scriptures, Teacher

COPY DATE FOR OCTOBER MAGAZINE: 10TH SEPTEMBER

