

Waiting is not an easy option. For most of us waiting seems a very negative activity. Alas, we are used to waiting for buses to arrive, workmen to ring the doorbell or perhaps in the doctor or dentist's waiting room. This type of waiting seems very passive and very frustrating. But waiting is at the heart of the weeks before Christmas which, in the church, we call Advent. Advent is a time of waiting, yes, but it is by no means a passive time. Waiting on God is marked by expectancy. These four weeks of Advent, the time when our sight is fixed on the coming of Christ is unlike waiting for the bus to arrive and is much more akin to Mary's sense of waiting for the birth of the Christ child. All of us who have experienced either for ourselves or among our families and friends the excitement of waiting for the birth of a child realise that this is no passive time. So, too, with Advent. In many parts of the church Advent has been marked over the centuries by abstinence or by fasting. Within the church's worship it is marked by the colour purple as a time of opening ourselves to the judgement in the light of God's love in the risky birth of Jesus of Nazareth. So Advent is not a passive time but a time of waiting expectantly.

Now, of course, none of us lives, or should live in an isolated spiritual bubble. We are all surrounded by the clamours of the Christmas hype - my first Christmas catalogue this year arrived in mid-July. But I do think we can use all the Christmas excitement positively and should not ignore it or be hopelessly caught up in it. The excitement provides the goal, the target. What we need to do during these four weeks of Advent, it seems to me, is to prepare ourselves to arrive at that goal. That is exactly the purpose of Advent. We need to open ourselves up, by whatever means seems most appropriate to us, to the big question, namely if the birth of Jesus shows the endlessly generous loving nature of God do we mirror that in our own lives, in our families, in our church and in our world? Yes, the gifts given and received on Christmas day, the feasting and the jollity are part of that, but they are only part of it. The harder question is how are we going to live out that generous loving reality in the days after Christmas? So I want to say enjoy Advent. Enjoy the time of preparation in which we acknowledge both the goal and the purpose of our celebrating Christmas and in which we are not afraid to ask ourselves how we will achieve it.

You will, of course, be most welcome at any of the services happening at St James' during Advent and Christmas, details of which can be found below. May I take this opportunity to wish everyone in our parish at Hampton Hill a searching and expectant Advent and an extremely happy Christmas, with the New Year living out the generous love of God as we find in the babe of Bethlehem.

Brian Leathard

CHRISTMAS SERVICES AT ST JAMES'

You are very welcome at any of these services

Sunday 19th December	18.30	Parish Carol Service
Christmas Eve	16.30	Children's Crib Service
	23.45	Midnight Eucharist
Christmas Day	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Parish Communion

Brian and Ramani

**Invite you to join an exciting journey to Sri Lanka in October 2005
- date to be finalised**

Cost Approximately £1100
including taxes, flights, half-board, transport and entrance fees

- See fascinating ancient civilisations
- Enjoy tropical warmth, vegetation
- Relax in traditional hospitality
- Visits to Buddhist, Hindu and Christian sites of importance
- Opportunity to meet people and converse with them

Please contact Ramani on rlathard@hotmail.com

Tel: 020 8979 2069

Open to all - tell your friends!

FESTIVE FAIRTRADE

Plenty of opportunities to shop with a conscience this Christmas
and spread awareness of Fairtrade products

Fair Trade Fair www.fairtradefair.org

Come and buy fairly traded goods from all over the world and have fun
Friday 3rd and Saturday 4th Dec 2004. 11am to 6pm. Admission £3 (concs. £1)
Venue: The Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, Westminster SW1

For those soccer crazy youngsters

Fair Deal Trading Partnership footballs, made in Sialkot Parkistan
The TEAM at £9.80 is an ideal football for aspiring young players
Order online at www.fairdealtrading.com or phone 08707 665 196
no-sweat sneakers, baseball caps also available

Festive goodies in Oxfam shops

tempting truffles and mouth-watering mints and chocolates in festive wrappings

Lots of ideas in the Traidcraft catalogue - pick up a copy in church

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY

Looking ahead to 2005
www.makepovertyhistory.org

A wide coalition of faith groups, charities, trade unions, campaigning groups and celebrities has announced ambitious plans for next year under the banner **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**.

The coalition includes the Church of England (and all other major denominations), Traidcraft and The Fairtrade Foundation. See website for the full list.

MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY aims to be the most powerful coalition ever against world poverty, calling for urgent and meaningful policy change on three critical and inextricably linked areas: **trade, debt and aid**. It is looking to Tony Blair as he hosts the G8 and holds the presidency of the EU to improve the lives of millions of poor people around the world who have to live on less than a dollar a day.

Look out for further news in the January Spire, including an ecumenical rally by the churches to mark their support. It will be in a central London location on **Saturday 29 January 2005**, so put the date in your diaries now.

Ann Peterken

NO HE'S NOT ON HOLIDAY, BUT ON SABBATICAL LEAVE

Most members of our parish church community will already know that I have been granted sabbatical leave by the Diocese from the middle of December 2004 until middle of March 2005. Sabbatical leave is a programme built into the church's ministry which mirrors the word Sabbath. It is rooted in the Old Testament tradition of resting on the seventh day. The purpose of sabbatical leave is to have time and space to refresh batteries, seek spiritual renewal and engage in a piece of learning which one would not normally have opportunity in parish ministry to undertake. Technically sabbatical leave, as the word implies, is due every seventh year. For me I have been ordained 22 years and this is the first sabbatical to come round so I am very keen to grab it with both hands.

I shall be out of the parish from 8th December 2004 until 18th March 2005. During this period, as always when the incumbent is out of the parish, the churchwardens carry the legal responsibility for the running of the parish. Julie will continue to minister as priest in this parish and she is the first point of call for any pastoral enquiry which any parishioner wishes to make. Do remember that her telephone number is 020 8941 4424 and her email is jag46@fish.co.uk. Rodney Taylor can be contracted on 020 8979 0046 and his email is rodntayl@aol.com and Liz Butler can be contacted on 020 8977 4227 and her email is lizbutler@tesco.net

We are indeed amazingly blessed in this parish by the ministry of our curate and churchwardens and I can assure you I would not be taking sabbatical leave if I had any fears that things would not be completely safe in their hands.

During the three months Ramani and I intend to celebrate our Silver Wedding in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where we were married. After a period of relaxation and celebration I am then seeking some spiritual retreat and refreshment by walking for some substantial periods of time (and miles!) in New Zealand hoping to enjoy the physical exercise and beauty of that country. I shall then be returning to Sri Lanka, with a short spell in South India, picking up some themes from my previous Phd research on the conflict between colonial governments and the Church Mission agencies in South Asia during the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Topping this off I will have the opportunity to read for two weeks in the library of the Union Theological Centre in New York.

Obviously I am very aware that this is a rare privilege and I intend both to enjoy it and to relish the different impulses which I will gain during this period so that I may better serve you as vicar upon my return in March 2005.

Gift of God

Put all pretence aside
feel free to receive
in all simplicity
the gift of God.

Instead of believing that it is I who seek
I can be the one who is sought.

That is what
the Incarnation
and Christmas
are all about.

God coming
to seek us in our very humanity
entering through the door of our everyday being
bringing a Word of love
mercy and hope

May the door be open
the gift welcomed.

†Cyril, December 1999

We are commanded to love, but “love” is a feeling which is sometimes elusive. So we ask Jesus to dwell in us, that he may be the God of love in us and through us. By being still and silent for a period we can make ourselves open and available to him, so that he can strengthen our souls and fill them with his love.

When John Skinner of “Hear our Silence” writes to our prayer group each month he always signs his letters “Peace and Joy”, which is the greeting used by the Carthusian monks.

The extract given above was amongst several which he sent out last Christmas. It might be material to reflect upon this year, if we can find a peaceful moment in all the excitement of the Christmas festivities, when we can be still and contemplate the wonder and mystery of the incarnation.

John is coming to conduct our parish “Quiet Day” in January.

Peace and Joy to everyone!

St James's Young Musicians Recital

Sunday, 17th October, 2004

What a wonderful concert the children put on in the church on Sunday 17th October with the help of one or two rather talented adults! From the moment the Travellers Band struck up with Pitoni's *Cantate Domino* to the finale when we all joined in the sang "*Sing Hosannah*", it was pure joy. All the performances were of an incredibly high standard.

Highlights? Every number was a highlight but 8-year old Hannah Bank's cool-as-a-cucumber violin rendition of *Scottish Brawl* made one smile from ear-to-ear. Olivia Nettleton and Alexander Lloyd, both age 10 and both on recorder, were similarly unfazed by the large audience; and Olivia's younger sister, Isobel, played a beautiful version of Ekode's *Minuet* on cello. Alexandra Brown also played a lovely classical guitar solo.

But there were bigger people there too - Frances Beaumont produced a lovely sound on her flute as she played Philippe Gaubert's *Madrigal* and Anusha Leathard sang *Ave Maria* with a quietly understated confidence.

And who can forget the 42 members of the children's choir under the brilliant guidance of Susannah Nettleton. The enjoyment comes in 3 phases:

- Seeing them being "marshalled" into their inch-perfect individual position on stage by Susannah
- The delightfully varied expressions on their faces, especially those of the boys!
- And, last but not least, the marvellously uninhibited sound they produced.

The Band played three sets of demanding pieces from their repertoire, usually heard at the beginning and end of the informal services on the first Sunday of each month. It provides a special opportunity for youngsters and adults to make music together - with an age range of 6 to 60!

Between all these items we heard great performances from a recorder group and string group that were formed specially for this event.

Enormous thanks go to several people. Martin Hinckley, for all his time and devotion in organising the concert and conducting the Band, Susannah Nettleton, for the choir and string group, Jackie Allen, for the recorder group, and Ash Charles, for his ever-present support on keyboard. Also to the other adults who supported in the band, choir and other groups. And most important of all, the youngsters who took part!

There were over 120 in the audience, who raised a substantial sum for the Open Doors Appeal, and everyone felt they had been given fantastic value for money.

Clive Beaumont

St James' Church Hampton Hill

Mission Action Plan

Advent 2004 to Advent 2007

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, male and female, Jews and Greeks, Slaves and Free”.

1 Corinthians 12

All people who respect one another and our church are welcome here, regardless of their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities or economic circumstances.

For more and 140 years St James' Church has lived for, prayed for and served our community in Hampton Hill and far beyond. Our Mission is God's Mission. We are sent out to live God's love in every part of our lives and so to bring healing, justice and compassion to all.

Our resources of people, buildings, money, time, intellect, imagination and energy help us in responding to God's love. Our new building, designed to be completed during the lifespan of this Mission Action Plan will be crucial in furthering our work.

This plan describes our focus for the next three years. Some work is new, some builds on our current activities.

We aim to be a community committed to living in God's love

- Open for all
- Engaging with world
- Growing in faith.

In order to do this we will

- Help people grow closer to God
- Attract people to church
- Nurture spiritual growth

Open for all

- 9.00-12.00 daily Monday to Friday - come in, rest and pray

- Services at other times, e.g. early commuter communion
- Book club - a chance to talk about what you have read and why it matters to you
- Weekly 'Lectionary' study Group - exploring the bible readings further
- Concert series - visiting players, children and from our own resources
- Drop in for coffee
- Schools - we cherish their visits and need to provide appropriate material
- A quiet focus for your spirit

Engaging with the World

- Morning prayer - daily prayer for individual needs
- Supporting newcomers and those in particular need
- Ongoing prayer and action for God's justice in the world (Christian Aid, third world debt release, Fair Trade, Voluntary Care Group, The Upper Room for the vulnerable, CARA for those with HIV/AIDS)
- Focussed Study (e.g. Lent and Advent)
- Pastoral care in our community through our clergy and our trained visiting team

Growing in faith

- Support for work with children and Young People
- Adult nurture - short term courses open to all
- Occasional offices - building on and following up the many baptisms, weddings and funerals which occur here
- Using Church's Year - teaching through the cycle of the year
- Art/visual input - using the church's space to display challenging art
- Other forms of worship - learning to participate in diverse styles of worship
- Spiritual development - encouraging Quiet Days, Retreats and Spiritual Direction
- Renewal through our social actions - integrating prayer, witness and action

For any further details of this Mission Action Plan (MAP) please see the fuller version on display in the church. The MAP is regularly considered by the Clergy and Churchwardens and the Parochial Church Council. Please feel free to raise any queries or issues with the Clergy and Churchwardens or PCC representatives. This MAP aims to be the response of the whole Parish Church to God's Mission of love in creating the universe, in Jesus Christ's revealing of full humanity and to the Spirit's indwelling in us through our Baptism into the Body of Christ.

Contacts: Clergy and Churchwardens

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

It is understandable that in our busy lives our time is so precious that finding an hour or two for others is not always at the top of our 'To Do' list. But could you take five minutes to read this and then think whether helping children could get to the top of your 'To Do' list?

The NSPCC has helped children for over 120 years. It's a sad and shocking truth that children die from cruelty and neglect **every week** in our country. And many thousands more suffer all forms of abuse, often in silence, believing that no-one cares about their plight.

The NSPCC's purpose is to end cruelty to children. Their vision is a society where all children are loved, valued and able to fulfil their potential - sounds good doesn't it? But we can't do it alone - the NSPCC needs to work closely with individuals, communities and other child protection agencies to achieve this aim.

Take Jane: the very first day at primary school she came in and told us her father was abusing her. She was obviously ready to tell and we were ready to listen. Of course she was in great distress. One of the most important things then is that we explain to the child what's going to happen. They may not like what we are telling them, but you let them know what you are doing and you keep checking in with them. So once Jane told the counsellor about the abuse, a whole process started. The school were told, social services were contacted, then questions like; is it safe for Jane to go home? Does the mother know about this? - all these decisions need to be made and Jane is sitting in class trying to do her maths and she knows these things are all happening around her.

So the counsellor kept checking in with her nearly every period and telling her everything that was happening. It turned out her mother didn't know about it, and she was very supportive. The father was arrested that night. At that stage we were able to continue telling Jane what was happening. There is so much guilt for the child as well, when the police have the daddy and maybe daddy has said, 'If you tell I'll be put in jail and you'll be put in a children's home'. That's the story abusers tell.

Please would you consider doing one of two things to help children like Jane?

1. Help the NSPCC in their campaign to end cruelty to children - sign up as a campaigner today. www.nspcc.org.uk/campaigning
 2. Hold a fundraising event to help us reach more children like Jane or join your local group. £20 would buy one hour of counselling in school - an hour which might make the vital difference for others like Jane. www.nspcc.org.uk/fundraising
- Don't throw away this chance to help children - please, put the NSPCC at the top of your 'To Do' list today. Thank You.

As at the first Christmas we live in troubled times. There can be false dawns of hope for the future. The writer of the poem below discerned one such false dawn following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Yet he found the true hope in the Christmas Story.

John Rainbow

Hope for East and West

For years to break their yoke the people cried,
Millions from whip and want and bullet died,
The structure crumbles, the tyrants turn and flee,
And suddenly the people find they're free.
What joy, what hope, what happy songs they sing,
Power to the People an end to woes will bring!
But free for what? With Marx no longer god,
Will chaos reign? Or some new ruler's rod?
To West they look to people who have long
Been free to choose and now are rich and strong.
But here midst wealth they see the poor in need,
Illiteracy and rugs and AIDS, the greed
Of millionaires who bribe and cheat. "Not this",
They cry, "The way of truth you badly miss.
You worship money, sex and power like those
Against whose evil tyranny we rose".

And yet for East and West alike its true:
At Christmas we can find the hidden clue
To all we long to see and be on earth,
In a stable where a peasant girl gives birth,
A babe among beasts, then forced to flee the swords
Of soldiers; humble worker sawing boards;
A country preacher of a subject race,
Condemned to die by cross, the worst disgrace;
Can he to twentieth century experts point
The way to mend a world that's out of joint?
He can because, though Son of God, he chose
To obey through death the Father's will. He shows
We can find wisdom from the One Above,
With plan and power to change the hearts of men
And so make families, nations, new again.

J.T.B.

The Bishop of London's Report to His Council

A Summary Account

The London Challenge was launched in 2002. It is a challenge to us all to demonstrate God's love by our service and also to learn of the contributions of fellow Christians to the wider London community.

One of the highlights of my own programme this year was my visit to Broadwater Farm. Following PC Blakelock's tragic death 19 years ago, his widow spoke for so many when she said she felt God's heart was breaking too. The Christian response to fear and suspicion has been and must continue to be to build a community of faith, love and healing. Much has been done, and I was able to experience the fresh Christian energies led by communities in the Diocese continuing this work.

We must broaden our vision to search for allies among all people of good will. I set some common goals for us for the period 2002-7, and we have been trying to keep the Diocese abreast of our targets. We are now at the half-way stage and a full progress report will be prepared in 2005.

One achievement is that we appear to be on track for a non-deficit budget by 2005. We can credit the efforts of all leaders, clergy and laity throughout the diocese for this firm financial base.

Another commitment was to establish the St. Ethelburga Centre for Preventing and Transforming Conflict in time for the tenth anniversary in 2003 of the bomb which demolished the church. Its new Director, Simon Keyes, will focus on relations between Muslim communities and the rest of British society.

To serve London we must become more and more a communicating church. We have made notable progress in this with our new Diocesan website.

We are nearing the aim of providing a wide variety of Christian training courses available to everyone by the end of this year. The completion of the St Katherine's Conference Centre and re-location of the North Thames Ministerial Training Course provide opportunities for theological education. The number of ordinands in the diocese training for priesthood is now 141.

There are problems. It is unlikely that we shall achieve growth in electoral rolls to 70,000 by next year. Also our leadership does not adequately reflect contemporary London despite the efforts of many, notably our gifted black clergy. We face challenges of new employment legislation, stipend levels and over-elaborate administration. Our vibrant city is growing and expanding, bringing new challenges.

We must prepare for new commitments in the next quinquennium that begins after 2007. In this time of great spiritual need and opportunity Bishops and this Council have seemed to be fitful in purpose. People are confused about belief and relationships. This is the challenge we face. There is no quick fix but I thank God for our partnership in the gospel which enables this Council to engage in the spiritual drama of our time.

WHO CARES FOR THE CARERS?

One in four adults will suffer from a mental health problem at some point in their lives and the stigma of mental illness remains all-pervasive with people still afraid to disclose a mental health condition even to family and friends. A short episode of mental ill health can have a long-term impact on a life, relationships and employment opportunities. A single hospital admission or period of sickness absence from work can lead to unemployment, homelessness, debt and social isolation. This can in turn lead to worsening mental health and a cycle of exclusion.

At Richmond Borough Mental Health Association (Richmond Mind) we aim to break that cycle, building people's confidence, removing barriers to engaging in the community, offering new opportunities and new choices so that people can fulfil their potential. Almost one thousand people benefit from our services each year.

A Carer's story

"When someone you love suddenly develops a mental illness this may well be the first time that you have ever encountered such a situation. You are desperate for what, at that stage, you probably believe will be a quick recovery, and your knowledge of how you can help will, in all likelihood, be minimal.

Our GP was highly efficient and identified the illness immediately. We'll send him to Dr ... he said. He'll sort it out. Five years later we are still hoping for a recovery. Caring for someone with a mental illness is bewildering and lonely. The medical teams are overloaded, patient confidentiality has to be respected, and often the carer becomes an outsider struggling with a situation that they had never anticipated. We learnt of the Mind Carers' Support Group almost by accident; attended a local mental health forum and in a break we learnt of the Carers' Group and arranged to attend their next meeting.

The value of this group has been immense. We only meet for a couple of hours once a month but the support that we are able to give to one another is invaluable. You may have thought that your situation is unique - but it isn't. You learn, understand and find consolation from the experiences of others. The relief in finding others who understand the situation and who may be able to give some form of support is palpable. We're a very varied group. Most of us would probably never have run into one another but for a common need, but we have become a family, supportive of one another. The family is open to anybody with similar problems who need us."

We now have government funding to set up more support groups and have recently started one in Twickenham, and the existing Maddison Group in Teddington has become affiliated to us.

We would like to let people in other areas know what we are trying to do and to tell us if there is a need in their areas. If you know of anyone who might benefit, could you please pass on this information and support them in their enquiry. Enquiries can be made on 020 8940 7384, or email carers@rbmind.com - general enquiries about the charity can be made on 020 8355 1974 or by email on info@rbmind.com

Kath Raven, member of Teddington Methodist Church (020 8977 4241 after 2pm)



On 22 November we had a happy tea party for those housebound and disabled people whom we visit regularly. Do you know of anyone who would welcome a regular, friendly visitor - maybe yourself?

Please remember in your prayers Marjorie Smee, a communicant at 8.00 am who on the eve of her 99th birthday fell and broke her leg. She is now recovering in West Middlesex Hospital, And please remember Sarah Walkden and her father Dr Leon Walkden both ill in hospital, Joanna Sunnatanby from Chelsea Close who has had heart by-pass surgery and Jean O'Sullivan back in Teddington Hospital.

Congratulations to Olivia Nettleton who has become a member of the School Council at Hampton Hill Junior School.

We were very pleased to welcome Angela Mullins on 21 November to preach about her African schools. We have supported her work and you have read letters from her in previous editions of the Spire.

Jeremy Malins, an army medical auxiliary is now stationed at Camp Dogwood with the Black Watch. Please keep in your mind all those involved in the struggle in Iraq. The Spire editorial board is working on a theme for next year and has decided to ask you to tell us about any life changing experiences. It may have been - a wedding, a holiday, a good book, the birth of a child - the list is very long.

Rodney Taylor would like all those who contributed to his "Sponsored Moustache", to know that he was able to give more than £1500 to research into testicular cancer. Thank you very indeed.

The Charity Christmas Card Sale realised £650 - the card-sellers are very grateful for your generosity.

Finally, three special wedding anniversaries this month, Brain and Ramini celebrate their Silver Wedding, so do Julia and Richard Sharp, whilst Margaret and Tony Lawrence rejoice in their Golden anniversary. Congratulations and many fond wishes to you all!

Confirmation, December

Candidates are - Emily Rowllins, Helen Williams and Euan Henry

Adults - Gus Jaspert, Milly Kilpatrick, Kirstie Butler Rebecca O'Leary and Darrell O'leary, who will be received into the Church of England.

Remember them in your prayers.

FROM THE OCTOBER REGISTERS

BAPTISMS

- 10 Sylvie Grace Varcoe, Hampton Hill
17 Thomas Ethan De Gruchy, Teddington

WEDDINGS

- 9 Lloyd Boulwood and Maxine Scaffardi
15 Abraham Brian Rogers and Shanie Lee Abercrombie

DATES TO NOTE DECEMBER

- 1 World Aids Day. The Church will be open for private prayer 9 to 4 pm
4 9.30 onwards annual gutter clean and in the Church Hall Christingle making. All welcome to help.
5 **Advent 2** Christingle Service
8 Hampton Hill Jnr School Carol Service in Church at 7.00 pm. All welcome
9 Hampton Hill Jnr School Carol Service in Church at 7.00 pm. All welcome
12 **Advent 3**
14 2.30 pm LEH Junior Department Carol Service
7.30 pm LEH Senior School Carol Service
15 6.30 PM Hampton and Hampton Hill Voluntary Care Group Christmas Community Music in Church
18 11.00 am Churches Together Around Hampton Carols at little Sainsbury's
19 **Advent 4** 6.30 pm Parish Carol Service
24 **Christmas Eve 4.30 pm Children's Crib Service**
11.45 pm Midnight Eucharist
25 **CHRISTMAS DAY 8.00 Holy Communion 9.30 Parish Communion**
26 **Christmas 1** St Stephen the first Martyr 9.30 am only Parish Communion
27 John, apostle and evangelist
29 Thomas Beckett, Archbishop of Canterbury and martyr, 1170

A three-night stay on the historical Island of Iona is part of a retreat pilgrimage taking place next year March 16 - 23

In the company of the former Bishop of Southwark, Bishop Roy Williamson, the week will take in the most important sites associated with the Celtic/Anglo Saxon period.

As well as experiencing retreat and Palm Sunday on Iona, visits to Holy Island, Durham Cathedral and accommodation in Durham are also included.

Price for the Week is £475 (4 nights H/Board, 3 nights F/Board and all trips incl.)

Further details are available at www.ukltg.com
or LTG Conferences on 01274 599622

A return coach from London is available for £525

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