

The Spire

The magazine of St James's Church, Hampton Hill

Free, but a donation helps us!

December 2008/January 2009

Christmas

A very happy Christmas to everyone!

Join us at St James's Church as we celebrate Christ's birth

Info Board

ONLINE Check out the website for all the latest news

Welcome

December 2008/January 2009



Welcome to our first edition in full colour. We thought it apt that the Christmas issue should be the first completely in

colour. It is much costlier to produce but we hope to have two full colour editions each year, the other at Easter. The new design is proving popular and we are hoping that it will inspire many of you to send us articles. We would also be pleased to receive any local digital photos with appropriate stories.

With Christmas coming to our shops earlier each year it is hard to take in and focus on the real meaning of Christmas. During December our church will host a considerable variety of events from various sections of the community,



all looking forward to the coming of Christmas. Details of many are below and you will find a warm welcome at any of these events.

To all our readers, on behalf of the Spire Committee, I send our good wishes for Christmas and look forward to your continuing interest and support in 2009.

Best wishes,

Janet

Janet Nunn, Editor.

The Spire

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Magazine distribution

The Spire is available free from church. It is also posted or delivered to more than 600 homes. For more about this, contact Susan Horner (see above).

Contributions welcome

The Spire is your magazine and we welcome articles. We regret we cannot print fiction, poetry or anything subject to copyright. We can't promise to publish, so to avoid disappointment please contact the editor first.

Getting the magazine

Lost a copy of **The Spire**? The magazine has been online since 2006. It can be enlarged and is available on tape. For more information contact the editor.

Magazine appeal

££ If you have enjoyed reading **The Spire** please make a donation to help us cover the printing and distribution costs. Cheques should be made payable to 'St James's PCC' and sent to the Parish Office. Thank you.

Next issue/Copy deadline

The next issue of **The Spire** will be in February, covering the build-up to Lent and Easter, and will be published on 1 February. All copy must be with us by **Monday 12 January 2009**.

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Services for December and January



Sundays in December

8am Holy Communion
 9.30am Parish Communion

7 December
 2nd Sunday of Advent
 Christingle
 Isaiah 40.1-11
 2 Peter 3.8-15a
 Mark 1.1-8

14 December
 3rd Sunday of Advent
 Isaiah 64.1-4, 8-11
 1 Thessalonians 5.16-24
 John 1.6-8, 19-28

21 December
 4th Sunday of Advent
 2 Samuel 7.1-11, 16
 Romans 16.25-27
 Luke 1.26-38

Wednesday 24 December
 Christmas Eve
 Midnight Mass
 Isaiah 9.2-7
 Titus 2.11-14
 Luke 2.1-14

Thursday 25 December
 Christmas Day
 Isaiah 52.7-10
 Hebrews 1.1-4
 John 1.1-14

28 December
 1st Sunday of Christmas
 Isaiah 61.10-62.3
 Galatians 4.4-7
 Luke 2.15-21

1st Sunday in month
7 December
 9.30am Christingle service

Mondays-Fridays
 (not Tuesdays)
 9.15am Morning Prayer

Tuesdays
 9.30am Holy Communion

1st Wednesday in month
3 December
 7am Commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month
4 December
 2pm Holy Communion

Christmas at St James's



Sunday 21 December
 6.30pm Carol Service

Wednesday 24 December
 Christmas Eve
 4.30pm Crib Service
 11pm Midnight Mass

Thursday 25 December
 Christmas Day
 8am Holy Communion
 9.30am Parish Communion

Friday 26 December
 St Stephen's Day
 10am Holy Communion

Thursday 1 January
 New Year's Day
 Naming and Circumcision of Jesus
 12noon Holy Communion

Sundays in January

8am Holy Communion
 9.30am Parish Communion

4 January
 Epiphany of the Lord
 2nd Sunday of Christmas
 Isaiah 60.1-6
 Ephesians 3.1-12
 Matthew 2.1-12

11 January
 Baptism of Christ
 Genesis 1.1-5
 Acts 19.1-7
 Mark 1.4-11

18 January
 2nd Sunday of Epiphany
 1 Samuel 3.1-10
 Revelation 5.1-10
 John 1.43-51

25 January
 Conversion of Paul
 3rd Sunday of Epiphany
 Acts 9.1-22
 Galatians 1.11-16a
 Matthew 19.27-30

1st Sunday in month
4 January
 9.30am All-age Communion

Mondays-Fridays
 (not Tuesdays)
 9.15am Morning Prayer

Tuesdays
 9.30am Holy Communion

1st Wednesday in month
7 January
 7am Commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month
1 January
 12noon Holy Communion



"It's easy to tell when it's Nativity Play time - I can never find a tea-towel!"

The full list of contacts will return in the February issue of **The Spire**.

Printing



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Please recycle this magazine when you have finished with it.



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Listen, can you hear a voice? Let Christ back into Christmas!

DEBBIE OADES

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

**St John of the Cross.
Feast day 14 December.**

*Born 24 June 1542, Fontiveros,
Spain. Died 14 December 1591,
Ubeda, Andalucia, Spain.*

St John of the Cross is considered one of the foremost poets in the Spanish Language. His *Spiritual Canticle* and *Dark Night of the Soul* are considered to be among the best poems ever written in Spanish.

Along with his contemporary St. Teresa of Avila he helped with the reformation and founding of monasteries for the new Discalced (barefoot) Carmelite order.

The poem below is his work *Living Flame of Love*, a song of the soul, describing great intimacy as the soul responds to God's love. As we come to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, may we be always joyful in the knowledge of God's love for each of us.

O living flame of love
Most tenderly you prove
The hidden depths of meaning in
my heart.
Since you continue still,
Then finish, if you will
And break the threads which keep
us now apart.

Gentle is your approach,
Yet deep is the reproach
I suffer from your mild and
courteous hand.
Eternal life you give
And all my debts forgive.
You kill me, yet through
death my life expand.

O living fire of light!
In your resplendent sight
The furthest depths of my
poor understanding,
Once blind and sore obscured,
With heat and light are cured
By the Beloved's strange and
tender branding.

Where secretly you rest
Alone within my breast,
What gentleness and love you
bring to me!
What spirit of sweet pleasure
You give in fullest measure
goodness and glory fill me
joyfully.

There is something about an empty space that can be quite scary. Authors fear the empty page of the writer's block: artists unable to put brush to canvas yet held to the emptiness by their desire to fill it.

This need to fill in the empty spaces even applies to how we spend our time. Many people plan diaries for two years' hence, and timetable in 'Time Out', but then fill it with activities!

And have you noticed how even when a new baby arrives, we have this compulsion to fill in the unknown? 'Oh they have their Mum's eyes' or 'their Dad's nose'. We start to try to guess their character.

If they bear little resemblance to the parents, we jokingly pass off the uncertainty with a comment ending with the milkman! To say something seems better than to leave the space open.

Christ is being sidelined from Christmas. The majority of Christmas card images have no relevance to his birth

This year, as we prepare to celebrate the arrival of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, for many the preparations are going to be very different. There are going to be empty spaces. The credit crunch is leaving many people and organisations facing financial ruin. Companies are cancelling staff Christmas parties. There's little chance of the Christmas bonus. Finances are no longer there to fuel the purchase of merchandise deemed socially necessary. The future is clouded in uncertainty.

For many the road to Christmas will be a hard and dusty one, just as was that of the Holy family that first Christmas. For them too, the future was not clear. They had travelled far to register their presence in society, and they had concern for the child Mary held within.

But for Mary the time had come; there was no time to prepare. Mary gave birth in a stable, in poverty. Christ Incarnate, God made man, laid in a manger.

This was not the sanitized rosy picture of today's Christmas cards or the front cover of *Homes and Gardens*. God didn't wait until Mary and Joseph

had a room prepared or the table laid. He didn't wait until they were safe or financially secure. He didn't wait until they had family around them. He didn't wait then, and he doesn't wait now.

He doesn't wait until we have sorted ourselves out, to come among us and live with us. He is here now, truly God, truly human, in the mess of today, in the mess of the world.

So at a time when it's difficult to see the wood for the trees, still there is good news. God's gift, the child born in a manger, Emmanuel, God with us.

What more could we ask for? But in the sceptical society of today the response is often, 'What's that got to do with me?' The answer, is everything! Because if we cannot take this gift on board, and accept it into our lives, then what are we celebrating Christmas for?

The reality is Christ is being sidelined from Christmas. The majority of Christmas card images have no relevance to the birth of Christ, and even the verses are often sanitised to 'Happy Holidays'!

Isn't it about time we dealt with the truth of Christmas? Isn't it about time we owned up to why we fill those empty spaces?

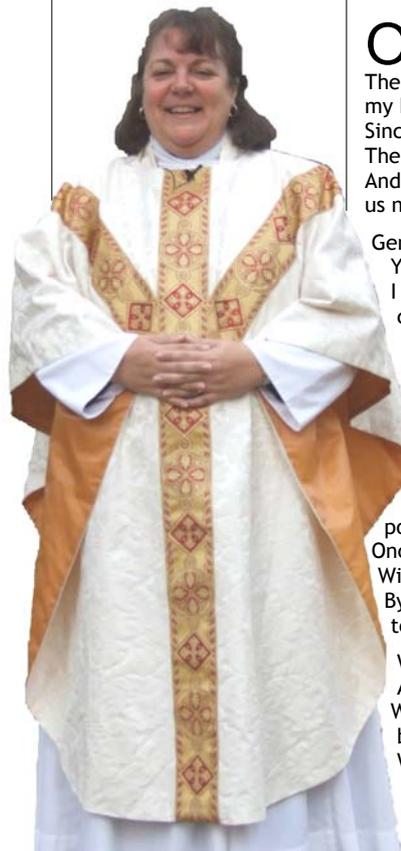
Those empty spaces are times we avoid because in their quietness we may just see ourselves; not as we want to be seen, but as we truly are, as God sees us. We may have to acknowledge that that still small voice within us is God calling us, challenging us, to let him in, just as we are.

To acknowledge that another knows us intimately, beyond human capacity, and can still love us, makes us feel vulnerable and requires humility to accept; something as a society and as individuals we all struggle with.

Yet in those empty spaces God waits longingly and lovingly for our response.

So this Christmas, let's try a little humility, and get our priorities right. In those empty spaces let us allow Christ back into 'CHRISTmas'!

Let us celebrate and worship with wonder and joy the greatest gift of all; that 'God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should have eternal life.'



Features

News Bulletin

Tooled up and on a mission to grow

CHARITY Thank you to everyone who has donated items to the charity Tools With A Mission. Our local collector, Peter Perrin, from Whitton Baptist Church, is thrilled with the tools, sewing machines, bicycles and fabrics that have been given by St James's.



A workshop has opened in Coventry, joining one in Ipswich. Please continue to support the charity with any unwanted articles. They are all refurbished by UK volunteers and then sent abroad to improve people's lives and help them to earn a living.

2.8m That's the number of people who participate in a Church of England service on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve. Some 43% of the population attend church at Christmas, rising to 48% in London and, nationally, 22% among those of non-Christian faiths.

VCG celebrates its history in a book

BOOK The Greenwood Centre features on the cover of Never Too Busy, a book about the Hampton and Hampton Hill Voluntary Care Group over the past 35 years.



(price £3) call into the Greenwood Centre in School Road or telephone them on 020 8979 9662. The front cover of the book (above) is a painting by Prill Hinckley.

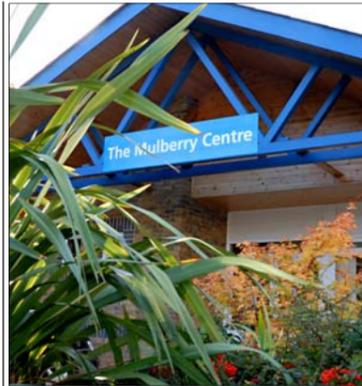
Susan Blay

It is with deep sadness that we have to announce the death on 11 November of Susan Blay. Susan was a much loved and active member of the congregation here at St James's, and will be greatly missed.

Registers for October

Baptisms 12 Emily Rose Pitman; Alice Margaret Ayres. 26 Arthur Llywelyn Henry Witherow; Thomas Stephen Lewis.

Funeral 29 Iris Maud Florence Pearson, 97, Hersham.



Living with cancer



The Mulberry Centre's sole purpose is helping people affected by cancer. Our role is to provide support to people whose lives have been affected by cancer in any way.

The centre is open to all irrespective of where they live. There is no postcode or geographical limitation. Whoever they are, all are welcome if life has been affected by cancer.

One in three of us will get cancer, but many more will be touched by the disease. The Mulberry Centre is a place to talk, unwind, have complementary therapies, but above all it is where there is always someone to listen.



The centre's library has a wealth of books and tapes to use



A 'meet and greet' volunteer registers a new centre user

All this is coordinated by just six staff. The full time staff are the Centre Director, the Cancer Information Officer, who has a background in cancer nursing, and the Volunteer and Services Coordinator.

In addition to these staff and the therapists and counsellors, there are also a number of other volunteers who act as 'meeters and greeters', who provide administrative support, look after the centre and its garden, and help in fundraising and the many other tasks that need to be done.

There are more than 60 volunteers who work in and support the centre. In addition there are ten trustees who are unpaid volunteers too.

The Mulberry Centre opened in 2001 and at that time it was part of West Middlesex Hospital. In 2004 it separated from the hospital and became an independent charity.

We are not funded by the NHS nor by any other charity, so all this money has to be raised from businesses, corporate donors, trusts, donations from organisations and individuals.



Yoga helps both body and mind

They may want to talk about their medical condition, their anxieties for themselves or their families, or their fears of having surgery, being ill or of dying.

As well as listening we offer relaxation therapies to help people to unwind. This might be a one-to-one complementary therapy, such as aromatherapy, massage, reflexology and shiatsu.

All these are very popular though some of them are unfamiliar at first to many of our users. The most important thing in the individual sessions is that the user has the undivided attention of the therapist.

In the group sessions there is a feeling of sharing that counterbalances the feelings of isolation that many feel when affected by cancer.

In 2009 Mulberry Week will be 18-26 April. If you would like to organise an event, volunteer to help, make a donation, or use our services, please contact us.

The Mulberry Centre WMUH Twickenham Road Isleworth Middlesex TW7 6AF 020 8321 6300 info@themulberrycentre.co.uk

There is much more on our website: www.themulberrycentre.co.uk

News Bulletin

Have you got the time, Vicar?

CLOCK Something has been missing from church and parish life of late. As many of you may have noticed, the church clock and chimes have been out of action since September.



The problem has been the rewinding mechanism, which requires a replacement part. The makers do not keep this as a spare and will need to make a special part for us.

The clock, which has given almost uninterrupted service since it was first set in motion in 1893, last stopped on 7 September 1990 when the pulley anchorages were affected by dry rot.

When St Andrew and St Mary, Granchester, faced a similar problem in 1912, the poet Rupert Brooke penned the lines 'Stands the Church clock at ten to three?'

And is there honey still for tea?

This is surely the perfect opportunity for any local bards to try their luck.

It is hoped to have the clock working by Christmas as we already know that many parishioners miss it and the chimes - perhaps including Peter, who may well use the 10am peal to time his sermon!

Charity began at home for many



Thank you to everyone who bought Fairtrade goods or charity Christmas cards on 2 November. The total raised from card sales for the various charities was £654.

May all your Christmases be green

GREEN Here are just a few ways of making this Christmas more ecologically sound.

- Buy a replantable or locally grown tree and make sure you recycle it afterwards - the council usually collects them from your door. Look out for details through your letterbox in December. Fairtrade decorations are available at Oxfam and Traidcraft, or get the children to make them. If you are buying tree lights, look out for LED ones - they use 100 times less energy than traditional lights. Use last year's wrapping paper for presents and tie with string, wool or ribbon rather than sticky tape to make it easier to reuse the paper next year.



Harvest gifts help those in need

Thank you to everyone in the church community and in our local schools who contributed gifts for Harvest Festival. These have now been distributed to the Upper Room in Hammersmith, which helps vulnerable adults, and the Vineyard Project in Richmond, an open-access drop-in centre for those in need of support.

Around the Spire is taking a break over Christmas and the New Year and will return in the February issue.

Young Spire

With Prill Hinckley



ONLINE There's much more to read and do online! Young St James's has a guide to our church and patron, Bible stories, puzzles and groups to join.

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The Colourful Christian Year, Part 1

The Christian Year is made up of five seasons: Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and Easter. (The rest of the year is referred to as 'Ordinary Time' as there is no special celebration.) It also consists of Saints Days, Festivals and Holy Days. These seasons and days make up the Christian calendar. Colour can be seen around the church, especially in the altar frontal, the pulpit fall, the Bible book-mark, the embroidered scarves (stoles) and the brightly coloured outer vestments (chasubles) of the priest and colours vary according to the time of the Christian Year. The seasons follow the life of Jesus like a story:

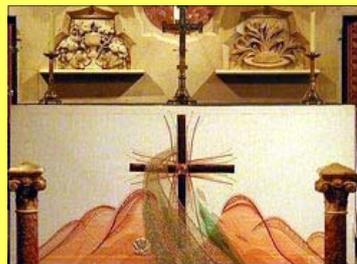
ADVENT

The story begins with the season of Advent, at the very end of November, which is a time of preparation for the birth of Christ. The colour for Advent is purple (penitence, preparation) which was the most expensive dye in Roman times. Being very expensive, purple became a sign of wealth, power, and royalty. Therefore purple is the colour during the seasons of Advent and Lent, which celebrate the coming of the King.



CHRISTMAS and EPIPHANY

Christmas, when Jesus was born, follows Advent. Angels announced Jesus' birth and the New Testament uses white to describe angels. So white (light, joy, purity) became the colour for the seasons of Christmas and Epiphany. Gold or ivory are alternatives to white. Epiphany follows Christmas and is the time when we remember the coming of the wise men, Magi, (traditionally named Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) bringing gifts for Jesus.



FESTIVALS

Red is the colour of blood and fire, and so is the colour for any service that commemorates the death of a martyr. December 26 is St. Stephen's Day, the 'Feast of Stephen' from the Christmas Carol, Good King Wenceslas. Stephen began to preach about Jesus but was stoned to death. He became the first Christian martyr. He was one of seven chosen to be 'deacons', meaning 'servants' and they were appointed to help the poor.



ORDINARY TIME

After Epiphany the story then follows Jesus' life through to his death, resurrection and ascension, when we will look at part 2 of this story. This period of time from the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas), is called 'Ordinary Time' as it is not a specific season of the Christian year. Green is used during 'Ordinary Time' as it is considered to be a natural colour, the colour of vegetation, the colour of life, creation and hope.





What's On

REVELATIONS



Christian welcome for atheists

'There is probably no God, now stop worrying and enjoy your life', says the new atheist advertisement on some London buses, partly funded by Richard Dawkins. The Methodist Church has given it a generous Christian response, thanking Professor Dawkins for encouraging 'a continued interest in God'. This response invites intelligent discussion rather than slogans. Probably most believers are encouraged rather than worried by their faith, seeing a proper perspective to their personal worries.

Eco answers to economic crisis

In the Stern Review of the Economics of Climate Change published in 2006, Lord Stern gave disturbing predictions of the effects of man-made atmospheric warming. Last October he gave his inaugural professorial lecture at the opening of the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change of the London School of Economics. Without swift remedial action the climatic trouble ahead would be worse and faster than his earlier forecast. He suggested a way forward with a double benefit. Given the political will and economic skill, we could assist the recovery of our depressed economy by really meaningful investment in a programme of ecological research and development. This would require more than token investment, serious money would be needed. Most people, including many politicians, would agree that this would be a good idea. We must hope actions follow words.

Art, imagination and the future

The Tate Modern always seems to present us with something stimulating, particularly in the giant Turbine Hall. Sometimes it is physical fun, like the spiral slides, sometimes a puzzle, like the giant crack in the floor. The present Turbine Hall exhibit TH.2058 is more specific, a dystopian prediction of life in 2058.

Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's rows of bare bunk beds represent an emergency refuge in the coming climatic apocalypse. Some mutated creatures seem to have come in to share the shelter. A screen shows moving pictures of the climatic disaster outside; it makes us appreciate 2008 and the world around us now. TH.2058 continues until 13 April 2009.

The voice of the Lord?

Making Music, formerly the National Federation of Music Societies, has reported an increase in the number of people joining informal choirs. Some people are reluctant to join church choirs, not wishing to join in an act of worship. Operatic societies sometimes demand a standard of competence that is daunting to amateurs. However, informal secular groups seem to be thriving, perhaps stimulated by the television programme *Last Choir Standing*.

Maybe if secular choirs do not completely avoid the magnificent hymns and oratorios of religious music the spirit of joy and reverence of these will give some non-church members an understanding and interest in Christian belief. In this season it would be good to share our Christmas celebrations with everyone.

Advent Course

Continuing 1, 8, and 15 December, 7.30pm, St James's Church.

Join us in all or any of the Monday meetings. Each week we look at different people in the Bible who prepared the way of our Lord.

Recital at Charterhouse

Thursday 4 December, 7pm, The Great Chamber, Charterhouse, London EC1M 6AN. An opportunity to visit the historic Sutton's Hospital in Charterhouse to hear pupils from The Purcell School perform an evening of chamber and solo works. No admission charge but tickets must be reserved in advance. Retiring collection. Telephone 020 7253 9503.

The Last Days of Judas Iscariot

4-6 December, 7.30pm, Studio Theatre, Art Education Schools London, Con Ripman House, 14 Bath Road, Chiswick W4 1LY. Students present an extraordinary courtroom drama where history's most famous betrayal is dissected by good and evil. In a court that owes as much to the ghettos as the gospels, figures such as Pontius Pilate, Mother Teresa and Sigmund Freud are called to testify in a trial of God versus Judas Iscariot. Tickets £14 (concessions £9). Telephone 020 8978 6666.

Christingle Service

Sunday 7 December, 9.30am, St James's Church.

It's 40 years since the Children's Society introduced the services to the Church of England. As ever, it is a wonderful opportunity to bring together children, family and friends, forge stronger links between church and schools and celebrate the Christmas message. Whether you are new to Christingle or one of our regular supporters, this fun and festive event has something for everyone. Money raised will help to improve the lives of thousands of impoverished children.

Marie Curie Cancer Care

13 December, 5-9pm, All Saints Church, Wood Street, Kingston Upon Thames KT1. The service is a chance to remember a friend or loved one. If you are unable to attend, please sponsor a light on the marketplace Christmas tree. Money raised will enable more terminally ill patients to have the choice of remaining at home. For more information telephone 020 7599 7338.

Commemorating Merton

Wednesday 10 December, 6.30pm, St Cyprian's Church, Marylebone Glentworth Street, London NW1 6AX. (Nearest Tube: Baker Street). The Thomas Merton Society and the Archbishop of Canterbury mark the 40th anniversary of the death of one of the most influential Catholic writers of the 20th century. Tickets £12. Send a cheque (payable to the Thomas Merton Society) to Stephen Dunhill, 2 Western Villas, Western Road, Crediton, Devon, EX17 3NA.

VCG Carol Concert

Wednesday 10 December, 6.30pm, St James's Church.

All are welcome to this candlelight service, hosted by Hampton Voluntary Care Group, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

RNLI Carol Concert

Tuesday 16 December, 7.30pm, St James's Church.

Hampton Choral Society present a concert of Christmas favourites in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution. Admission £5.

Carol Service

Sunday 21 December, 6.30pm, St James's Church.

Everyone is invited to join us as we celebrate with our annual carol service.

Christmas Eve services

Wednesday 24 December, St James's Church. Join us for the annual crib service at 4.30pm as we mark the birth of Christ. Later, at 11pm, there is the traditional Midnight Mass.

Christmas Day services

Thursday 25 December, St James's Church. Begin Christmas Day by celebrating its true meaning. Holy Communion is at 8am and our Parish Communion follows at 9.30am.

St James's Theatre Club

Thursday 12 February, 7.45pm, *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, Richmond Theatre. A glorious romp. Reduced ticket price is £13.

Tuesday 24 March, 7.15pm, *The Tempest*, Richmond Theatre.

Starring Antony Sher. Reduced tickets £17.

To join us, please put your name on the church notice board or telephone Ria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336. Transport can be arranged.

Vicar's View



...no I don't think you're the real Father Christmas!
I think you're up there pinching lead off my roof!!

Your Voice

John Rainbow

Our Church

When to admonish and when to listen. A lesson to learn this Christmas



This month's **Your Voice** is in large part due to the spiritual inspiration I have received from well-known sportsmen of an earlier age - a Davis Cup tennis player, English/Springbok rugby internationals, a West Indies test batsman - who all became personal friends, as did the cricketer referred to in the story below, always concerned about my physical fitness - but even more as to whether I was fully equipped to engage with God in his transforming 'game of life'.

Amongst the Words of Welcome to Debbie, our new Curate, on Harvest Festival Sunday, which included what Priests are called to be and do, the one which immediately set me thinking was the word 'admonish'.

Most of us are I think hesitant about admonishing others - except when riled! Yet where would the popular TV programme *Strictly Come Dancing* be without admonition?!

So when and in what circumstances might it be appropriate to admonish? A later word in the Welcome gave some indication. It is through being 'Guided by the Spirit' that Priests can best *discern* when to admonish. But it may be that it is not only Priests but lay people who can exercise such judgement beneficially.

I offer one example; I was for many years responsible for preparing the accounts of a Christian charity (Initiatives of Change) for the annual audit. It was our practice, on the first day of the auditors' visit, to invite them for lunch so that we could get to know each other better personally as well as professionally.

All went well on one occasion until I invited a colleague, a retired professional cricketer (and son of an Anglican clergyman) to join us for coffee.

As so often happens at such times, the topic of the day came up for discussion. At that moment it was the memorable speech by the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, that the 'winds of change' were blowing right across Africa.

The senior auditor suddenly burst out: 'I hope those winds blow so hard that they send all those

Afrikaaners into the sea'.

Stunned silence, as the rest of us pondered why - emotive as the apartheid issue was at the time - a seemingly mild-mannered man had made such a sweeping statement.

My cricketer friend, clearly discerning that the time for some admonition had come, said: 'Well, Mr..., I find that I have more trouble with the neighbours in my street than those whites thousands of miles away over there'.

Another long silence ensued, only broken when the auditor responded: 'You've got a point there. I'm not getting on at all well with my next door neighbour. I know exactly why it is. When I get home at night, I like to play classical music on my recorder, turning it up loud and standing with arms akimbo pretending I'm the conductor.'

'A loud knocking comes from the neighbour's adjoining wall, clearly requesting me to "turn it down". I take no notice, so engrossed am I in my own enjoyment. I guess I'll have to go along and put that right'.

That wasn't the end of it. When next morning we enquired as to whether he had carried out his professed intention, he said: 'Oh yes, I knocked at my neighbour's door, half expecting to be thrown out, but instead was welcomed inside.'

'I said why I had come, made apologies for my misdeeds, assuring them it wouldn't happen again.'

'At this point my neighbour said: "Let me tell you why we are so concerned. We are expecting our first child, my wife needs extra sleep and the noise from your house has prevented her from getting it.'

"What is more, all our relations live many miles away, so who will help care for my wife in those early days after the birth whilst I am at work?"' (No paternal leave was then granted.)

'Do not concern yourselves any longer,' the auditor replied. 'Rest assured that my wife will give yours all the care she needs. We will be good neighbours from now on'.

A story for these times as well as those surely?

If you'd like to comment on something please email the editor: janunnhh@btinternet.com



There are two panels in the East window above the altar in the Sanctuary which show images describing this time of year.

Left panel (above): The Birth of Jesus. Right panel (below): Holy Family and Magi.

The whole window was erected in memory of Thomas Emeas, 1814 - 1875.

