

THE LEADER COLUMN

THE HORRORS OF AUSCHWITZ AND THE LOVE, FORGIVENESS AND LIFE OF JESUS

I will remember them...



As part of my summer holiday I went to Krakow, in southern Poland. It is a fine city. Its main square, Old Town, churches, and Wawel Castle are very splendid. I greatly enjoyed the visit. About an hour's drive from Krakow, though, is a place that stands out in the annals of infamy - Auschwitz. I will confess to having been in two minds about whether or not to visit it; yet I did so, and I am pleased I did. Or can I really use the word *pleased*? It seems so banal when we begin to consider what happened there.

Our tour of Auschwitz began with the original concentration camp, a converted Polish army barracks, and then moved on to 'Auschwitz 2' - Birkenau. There were actually three concentration camps, and many more sub-camps. What stood out from the visit? Let me just give you a series of snapshots:

- A corridor lined with photographs taken by the Nazis of those chosen to work rather than be exterminated. Each photograph had the date of arrival and the date of death. Most died within a few months of arrival. Two photos stood out: twin girls, aged fifteen - one lasted for two months, the other for four.

- The absence of birdsong despite the trees.
- Each person held in the camp having thirty seconds in the morning, and thirty seconds in the evening, to go to the toilet. They had no toilet paper.

- Piles of suitcases with people's names, locations, and dates of birth written on each.

- A huge pile of women's hair, cut from prisoners.
- A mound of pots and pans. They were brought by people sent to the camp who were cruelly deceived by being told they were being re-located to a new home.
- The sheer scale of Birkenau - the industrialisation of killing, the recycling of parts of human bodies.

Have you had enough yet? Sorry, there is more.

- Children's shoes, hundreds of pairs.
- Discarded artificial limbs.
- Eight people having to sleep in a space for one.
- A wooden stake in the ground from which people would be hung from their hands, tied using barbed wire.
- The triangles worn by inmates - separate ones for Jews, homosexuals, gypsies and Jehovah's Witnesses.



Peter Vannozi

- Above the gate into the original camp are the words *Arbeit macht frei*: 'Work makes you free'.

All of these are things that I have taken away with me - others still come back to me when I might rather they did not.

This month sees us observe Remembrance Sunday. It is a time to remember those who have given their lives, or had them taken away, in past conflict. This year I will especially have in mind the victims of the Nazi extermination camps alongside the many millions of others who have died in war.

When I come to lead the two minutes silence at St. James's, I wonder what possible sense I can make of Auschwitz.

What makes it different from other terrible acts of genocide? One of the Allies during the war, Stalin, presided over the death of millions. Today people are still dying in high profile conflicts like Afghanistan and Iraq, and in less well reported places such as the Congo.

There seems to be something about Auschwitz that makes it a symbol of all that is most evil in our world. Perhaps it is the sheer, relentless efficiency of it all. Or the clear and systematic working out of an ideology that saw human beings of the wrong racial group as fit for slaughter. Or the degrading of people so that they were no longer a husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, child — but at best a number, and at worst a piece of meat. I ask again, what sense can be made of this?

At the end of the tour, as we stood by the railway line into Birkenau, which had brought in so many to die, the guide simply said 'You and I are lucky.' She then listed all the things that we take for granted, but which were denied to inmates of Auschwitz — such as how long to spend washing. I felt that I wanted to cry with thanks for what I had. For the moment, this is where I stand. I want to give thanks, and I will remember, hoping to God (literally) that Auschwitz will stand for ever as a sign of how we are not to live. I cannot say why God allowed such suffering, but I am still drawn back to him as I see him in Jesus. For me, without this, there is only the horror. In Jesus my sense of horror can be met with love, forgiveness, and life.

'We will remember them...'

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

November sees the nation observe Remembrance Sunday. Here are parts of the order of service for Remembrance Sunday devised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It brings together the major churches of these islands.

Gathering

We meet in the presence of God.

We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all who in bereavement, disability and pain continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow those whose lives, in world wars and conflicts past and present, have been given and taken away.

Remembering

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them.

When you go home tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow we gave our today.

Praying Together

Let us pray for all who suffer as a result of conflict, and ask that God may give us peace: for the service men and women who have died in the violence of war, each one remembered by and known to God; may God give peace.

For those who love them in death as in life, offering the distress of our grief and the sadness of our loss; may God give peace.

For all members of the armed forces who are in danger this day, remembering family, friends and all who pray for their safe return; may God give peace.

For civilian women, children and men whose lives are disfigured by war or terror, calling to mind in penitence the anger and hatreds of humanity; may God give peace.

For peacemakers and peacekeepers, who seek to keep this world secure and free; may God give peace.

For all who bear the burden and privilege of leadership, political, military and religious; asking for gifts of wisdom and resolve in the search for reconciliation and peace; may God give peace.

A FAIR SHARE AT CHRISTMAS; PUPILS GET READING

Make your Christmas presents count



TRAIDCRAFT, one of the UK's fair trade pioneers, celebrates its 30th birthday this year — and with your support this Christmas, our gifts can help fight poverty across the world.

The latest catalogue has the UK's widest range of fair trade products. Now is the perfect time to borrow a catalogue from church or look online at

www.traidcraftshop.co.uk — then give your order to Ann Peterken (020 8891 5862) or Catherine Gash (020 8783 0563).

You can also visit a special 30th anniversary display of Traidcraft goods in All Hallows Church Hall (entrance via Erncroft Way, Twickenham), on Sunday 8 November from 11am-4pm.

Much has been achieved since Traidcraft was established in 1979 as a Christian response to poverty. More and more Fairtrade goods are available in the shops, but pioneering companies are still essential. They bring new products to the Fairtrade market and help to ensure big players stay on the right track.

■ **The Fairtrade Foundation** has been given £12m of government money to mark 15 years since the FAIRTRADE Mark arrived on products in our shops. It is hoped that the grant will double the number of farmers helped by the scheme and treble sales of products. Last year sales of Fairtrade products in the UK rose by 43% to over £700m.



A new chapter for Rwandan school



IN 2007 Venetia Barrett visited Shyira, **Rwanda**, to gain practical experience in a mission hospital. While there she visited the state secondary school, Groupe Scolaire de Shyira. 'The lack of books or any kind of study aids, beyond a blackboard and chalk, struck me strongly and on my return I

decided to try to help,' she said.

Jane Ormerod, a teacher at **Denmead School** in Hampton, offered a large number of English and Maths books which were being replaced. Venetia's mother, Griselda, and Ann Peterken took on the task of getting the books to Shyira. They have now arrived and Gervais, the school's head of study, has reported that the pupils and staff are overjoyed. The books are especially welcome as the Rwandan government has changed the national language of instruction from French to English. Gervais also suggested a permanent link with Denmead School. 'We want to know them more,' he said.

■ Venetia now hopes to find more schools willing to donate books. If you know of any schools that might be able to help please contact her on 020 8979 3331 or email griseldabarrett@blueyonder.co.uk.

COMPOST November is the time not only to collect up fallen leaves, but to compost them. If you haven't room in your compost bin, they can be put in ordinary black sacks with a few holes punched with a fork in them. It takes two years, but makes very good compost for your plants for free.



REGISTERS FOR SEPTEMBER

Baptisms

6 William Thomas Hird, Teddington

13 Olivia Ami Chrystine Bangura, Teddington

20 Isla Elizabeth Welsh, Teddington

20 Holly June Cooper, Hampton Hill

27 Arran William Richardson, Hanworth Park

27 Stuart Charles Richardson, Hanworth Park

Funeral

21 Evelyn (Eve) Rita Stock, 71, Hampton Hill

Gone, but not forgotten



Dick Wilde discovers how the churchyard has its own stories of bravery and loss from the two world wars

Our churchyard is a peaceful and pleasant place, which is kept tidy without too much regimentation. The grass is strimmed but not cropped, and when the patches of wild flowers, snowdrops, crocus, primroses and bluebells are blossoming they are carefully preserved by the council strimmers. Bushes and trees are allowed to flourish, but not to become overgrown.

A magnificent oak spreads its branches in the eastern end of the churchyard area, and a Canadian maple gives a beautiful display of russet red leaves in the autumn. There are pine, beech and yew trees also. Birds enjoy the trees, and the rattle of a woodpecker can be heard quite frequently in early summer. Sometimes at dusk an owl sits in a pine, giving its characteristic hoot.

The footpaths are well used, and though it is by no means gloomy the dignity of the area as a place of remembrance is respected by the many people who pass through it, including the young children who walk through on their way to and from school.

A large white stone tablet, which can be read from the churchyard, is built into the eastern end of the church wall. It has an inscription dating the initial consecration of the church as 1863. It lists the further developments of the church building up to 1879, and finishes with the initials F J F which stand for Fitzroy John FitzWygram, the first vicar of the church, who died in 1881.

There are more than 4,000 graves recorded in the burial register, of which about 1,000 can be identified by their markings in the churchyard. A comprehensive record of the identifiable graves has been compiled, and may be consulted by relatives and friends who wish to visit a particular grave. The record identifies the position of individual graves by maps and an alphanumeric reference. A copy is kept in the church office and is also on our website. The first burial record we have is of an 11 month-old boy, Walter Richard Daines, who died in 1864.

Four vicars are buried in the churchyard, including the Revd Fitzroy John FitzWygram. In 1990 the churchyard was closed for burials, except for reserved plots and for the interment of ashes following a cremation.

For interments an area has been reserved in the churchyard, not far from the lych-gate entrance which is at the north-east corner. The area has a lawn to receive the ashes, bordered by flowerbeds and a wooden bench, which can be used as a quiet place for reflection. Uncontained ashes are interred with a formal ceremony. No marking is left on the lawn; flowers are sometimes left by mourners on and around the lawn and the surrounds, but they are gathered up after a few days so that the lawn is kept clear and the permanent flowerbeds undisturbed.

The whole churchyard is a place for remembrance of parishioners and the family members of parishioners who have died. A very special memory is kept of those who died in the two world wars in the service of



Reunited: the ashes of Phyllis Manning join her husband in his last resting place

their country. The names of these men and women are inscribed on the War Memorial.

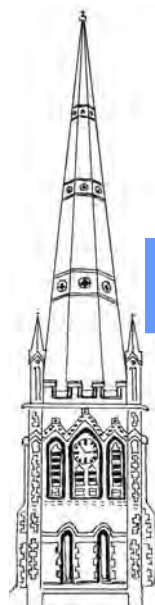
Additionally there is a special area in the churchyard for the graves of some of the Canadian soldiers who fought in the first world war and who died locally. There is also a memorial tablet to Joe Boyle, a Canadian first world war soldier whose remains were returned to Canada. The grave of H A (John) Manning, a local man who fought in the second world war and died later of his injuries has a special story.

The War Memorial

The War Memorial commemorates those men and women from local families who died in the forces in the service of their country during the two world wars. The plinth of the memorial is inscribed with the names of 124 such men who died in the first world war, 1914 to 1918, and the 29 men and women who died in the second world war, 1939 to 1945. The inscribed plinth is surmounted by a tall stone cross, which is visible from nearly all the churchyard. It is the focus of our Remembrance Sunday ceremony which is held each November by the memorial.



Home from home: the Canadian war graves in the shade of a maple tree



AROUND THE SPIRE

NEWS FROM HAMPTON HILL AND BEYOND

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning We will remember them.

Laurence Binyon, *The Fallen*

The Canadian War Graves

During the first world war a contingent of Canadian troops was billeted in Bushy Park, and Upper Lodge became the King's Canadian Hospital for Canadians wounded in battle. Some died of their wounds and were buried in an area of our churchyard reserved for them. Special care is still taken of these graves; the Canadian War Graves Commission has given us help in their maintenance.

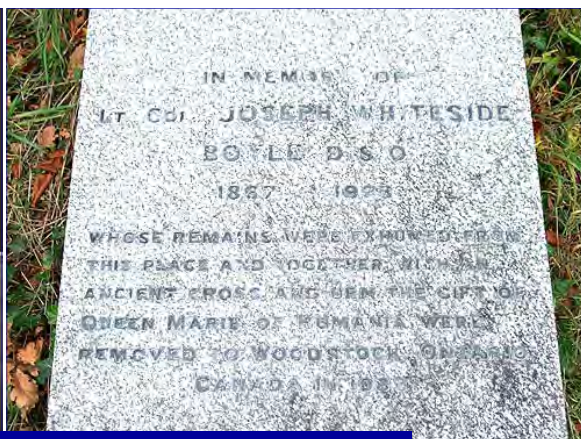
There are 13 graves, all of a similar pattern with plain white headstones, kept with close-cut grass and tended flowerbeds. A Canadian maple shades the graves, and the whole area is of particular interest and importance to Canadian visitors, some of whom were related to the soldiers. A fourteenth Canadian soldier, Joe Boyle had a very remarkable war record.

Lt Col Joseph Boyle DSO

Joe Boyle was a man of great initiative and great independence. Born in 1867, he made his fortune in the Yukon. At the outbreak of the world war in 1914 he tried to enlist but was refused because of his age.



Honoured: the extraordinary life of Canadian Joe Boyle



Undeterred he raised and equipped a fifty-man machine-gun troop for the allied cause.

His subsequent career was quite extraordinary. He was given a series of diplomatic missions, and was awarded honours from Russia, France, Britain, Romania and was given the title of Duke of Jassy by the Queen of Romania.

After the war he settled in Hampton Hill, where he died in 1923, and was buried in St James's churchyard. The Canadians requested that his remains be returned to them, permission was given by our church and diocese, and in 1983 the remains were exhumed and buried in Ontario with a plaque in his honour. A memorial stone has been put on the site of his original grave in our churchyard.

The Manning Grave

A distinctive feature of the churchyard of St. James's Church is the presence of war graves, maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. With the exception of one grave, all are for those who died of injuries incurred during the First World War. The exception is the grave of H. A. Manning, a driver with the Royal Army Service Corps, who died on 7 April 1947 at the age of 29, of injuries suffered during the Second World War.

He was known as John, and was a resident of Hampton Hill. What makes this grave stand out further from the other graves is that there is a stone placed flat beneath the war grave stone dedicated to Phyllis Marjorie Manning, the widow of John, who died on 4 August 2008 at the age of 93.

She emigrated to Australia, and never re-married. After her death in 2008, Mrs. Manning's family got in touch and requested that her ashes should be brought from Australia, and her mortal remains buried with those of her husband. This duly happened in December 2008. The Mannings were in this way re-united some sixty- one years after John's death.

Fifty years ordained, our former vicar Nicholas

Congratulations to the Revd **Nicholas Chubb**, former vicar of St James's, who recently celebrated the 50th anniversary of his ordination as deacon in the Church of England.

Nicholas and his family arrived in Hampton Hill in July 1981. Notable among the many innovations introduced during his ministry were the Sunday morning Informal Service and the remodelling of the church, bringing the altar forward into the nave on the new raised stage.

In 1988 Nicholas moved to the Peterborough area and Hospital Chaplaincy. He and Susan have since retired to York. Both are well and Nicholas reports that his latest diversion – and one of which his doctor heartily approves – is playing golf!

The three Chubb children are all settled in their respective careers. Andrew is Principal of the Archbishop Sentamu Academy in Hull; Sarah is still a part-time GP; and Naomi is a lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University.

We send all good wishes to Nicholas and Susan and remember with gratitude the seven years of Nicholas's faithful ministry with us in Hampton Hill.



■ **Sarah Peterson, who has taught The Jays for several years, needs to stand down after Christmas. We thank her for all her hard work and wish her all the best. This means that Lou Coaker is looking for new teachers to work alongside her in our Sunday School from January 2010. If you can you help, or know anyone who might, please contact Lou on 020 8979 2040.**



Father and son baptised

The **Richardson family** had a double celebration when father Stuart and baby son Arran were both baptised at the same service in September. Stuart and Sarah were married at St. James's in 2005 and their first child Erica was baptised in 2007. Sarah was confirmed here in 2006.

■ We are always happy to print news of parishioners. If you have a special anniversary or a birthday ending in 0 which you would like mentioned, please tell us at least a month in advance.

Take a trip down memory lane at St James's

St James's celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2013 — and like the Olympic Games we need to begin work on the celebrations now! To mark the occasion, we plan to print a commemorative history of the church, but that is where we need *your* help. If you have any interesting stories or anecdotes to share, we would like to know about them. Please search your photograph albums at the same time and contact the vicar or Prill Hinkley.



Quiz - St. James's Churchyard

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The churchyard is the land surrounding the church and used as a graveyard. It has been consecrated by a bishop and is sometimes called 'God's acre'. Consecrated means set apart as sacred. It covers an area of about 1.6 acres and contains about 1200 known graves.

▪ Choose the right word to make the sentences:

- This is the (*pych, lych, tych*) gate.
- It is a roofed entrance into the (*churchyard, church, church hall*).
- The priest used to perform the first part of the (*wedding, baptismal, funeral*) service under this roof in the middle ages.



▪ Fill in the gaps below with the following words: (*engraved, Remembrance, silence, wreaths, built*)

The War Memorial was to remember the 151 men and two women from Hampton Hill, who lost their lives during both world wars.

- Their names are around its base. On every Sunday are laid here during a special service at 11 o'clock when the two minutes is observed.

▪ Sort the letters to make the sentences:

Gravestones serve as (MLSAMOEIR) to the dead.

- They are made of (TSNEO), marble or granite.
- The letters RIP stand for the Latin words Requiescat In Pace, meaning 'rest in (EAPCE)'.
- This picture shows the grave of our first vicar, Rev. (FTZYIOR) John Fitzwygram.



▪ Colour the pictures ▪ Draw arrows from the pictures to the correct titles and descriptions:

Daffodil



This flower, with its white blossom is a symbol of purity and humility, and it is often associated with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Holly



This tree is very old and slow-growing, so has been looked upon as a symbol of immortality. It is, therefore, a suitable tree to be planted in the place where people are buried.

Yew



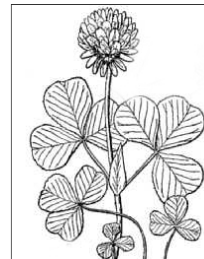
This is a three-leaved plant and a symbol of the Holy Trinity. Each individual leaf has three separate parts, just as God is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

Clover



This shrub has long been thought of as a symbol of victory and can remind us of the victory of Christ over sin and death. It is an evergreen shrub which is symbolic of everlasting life.

Lily of the Valley



These prickly leaves remind us of the crown of thorns which Jesus wore when he was crucified. The red berries are like drops of blood which remind us that Christ's blood was shed for us.

Laurel



This flower reminds us of everlasting life. Though the bulbs look dead when they are placed in the ground, new life springs within them and they blossom into beautiful flowers.



Revelations

The Real Enemy

Faced with a difficult or unpleasant task, we are sometimes tempted to do something less demanding rather than tackle it. Psychologists describe this behaviour as 'displacement activity'. Climate change seems to drive nearly all world leaders to displacement activities of one kind or another. Most make some sort of gesture towards at least delaying the catastrophe predicted by climatologists. International conferences are held in which pledges are made, which for some reason or another are impossible to keep, and friendly noises about green energy are heard. Modest contributions to green energy schemes are made. The actions taken are completely inadequate to the task of the limitation of greenhouse gases. Massive investment in oil production continues, including the vastly polluting extraction of crude oil from oil sands, and armaments of all kinds are proliferated. Wars and preparation for wars are popular displacement activities. Serious attention to wind, wave, tidal and solar energy, although at present uncompetitive with fossil fuel energy, would be a lot cheaper than producing nuclear weapons, warships and warplanes. It would also be a real fight against the real enemy.

Religion as the Last Resort

A growing body of knowledgeable and influential people, usually scientists of various disciplines, are increasingly alarmed by the seemingly inexorable warming of the planet. Lord May, once chief scientific advisor to the government, has been a vigorous advocate of measures to combat climate change for many years, and has been an outspoken critic of world leaders and their complacency. Now as president of the British Science Association, speaking on the eve of their conference he said that although himself an atheist, the belief in God may be needed to protect humanity from itself and its self-destruction. He suggests that if religious leaders were to emphasize God as a disciplinarian ready to exact retribution on us it could persuade believers of the folly of our abuse of the planet. It is a pity to criticise a man of such stature and with such a good purpose, but his picture of believers' God is little different to Jove and his thunderbolts. There is a powerful voice from religious leaders urging specific measures to rein in ecological destruction. They speak of love of man, of our planet and our God. Thunderbolts are of our own making. We are on the same side as Lord May; it would be worth his while to understand and perhaps respect his allies better.

Remembrance

The First World War broke out in 1914. Few people at that time had any real idea of its dreadful outcome. Remembrance Day, 11 November, the day the war ended in 1918, was to be a reminder of the wounding, suffering, deaths and bereavements of that war; it was to be a war to end all wars. Twenty-one years later it was necessary to fight again, although this time few people had any illusions about the awful price that would be paid. It would be naïve to think that the turbulent world could function without national defence. But the price of using force should be very clear to our leaders, by history if not from their personal memory.



All Saints' Day

- Sunday 1 November, St James's Church*
- This service celebrates those in whom we have seen God powerfully at work and who are a source of inspiration.
- All Souls' Service, 6pm**
- Our attention turns to those we have known more directly: those who gave us life, or nurtured us in faith.

Remembrance Sunday

- Sunday 8 November, 9.45am, St James's Church*
- Parish Communion is followed at 10.55am by a procession to the Cenotaph in the churchyard for an Act of Remembrance. Remembrance Day and the 11 am Two Minute Silence have been observed since the end of the First World War. When we bow our heads in reflection, we will have many hundreds of thousands of brave people to remember. They are not just those who fought in the two World Wars, but those who have died in more recent conflicts, including Iraq and Afghanistan.

St James's Ark

- Carers and Toddlers' Group, 10.30am to 12.30 pm every Monday during term time, St James's Church.*
- Come and share in conversation, refreshments, play time, story time, crafts and worship. £2 per session, per family.
- Contact Debbie Nunn 020 8979 3078.

Charity Christmas Cards Sale

- Sunday 1 November, 10.30am, St James's Church Hall*
- This is a chance to stock up on Christmas cards and support charities, including RNLI, FSID (cot death research), Princess Alice Hospice, Shooting Star Hospice and Christian Aid. Fairtrade goods will also be available.

St James's Theatre Club

- Tuesday 3 November, 7.45pm, Dial M for Murder*
- Tickets are £14 (normal price £24).
- Monday 16 November, 7.45pm, Mrs Warren's Profession* starring Felicity Kendal. Tickets are £18 (£28.50).
- Tuesday 12 January 2010, 7.45pm, The Woman in Black.* Tickets are £14 (£24).
- To join us, please add your name to the lists on the church notice board or telephone Ria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336. Transport can be arranged.

The Age of Stupid

- Friday 13 November, 7.30pm, St James's Church Hall*
- This film is an excellent way to start thinking about climate change and the way we live. For more information contact Catherine Gash, telephone 020 8783 0563.

Vicar's View



"But, apart from the pews, the sermon, the hymns, the coffee and, 'all that praying', you'd come again?"

Climate Justice Evening **tearfund**

Thursday 19 November, 7pm, All Souls Church, Langham Place, London W1B 3DA.

Poor people are hardest hit by climate change, yet have done the least to cause it. Find out everything you need to know to be part of a united Christian response. Telephone 0845 355 8355 to book places

Confirmation Service

Sunday 22 November, 6pm, St James's Church

Do come and support our candidates, and those from other local churches, as they are confirmed by the Bishop of Kensington, the Rt Revd Paul Williams (pictured).



Hampton Hill Christmas Parade

Friday 27 November, from 7pm, in the High Street
Celebrating its 41st year, the parade and tree lighting event, sponsored by The Little Gym and Greenacres, is the largest in the area, attracting 6000 people. Forty teddy bears will be hidden in shop windows for children to spot to win one of three cycles. The parade includes bands, local schools and dogs in fancy dress, and there are sideshows, live music and carol singing. The event starts with a Santa Dash. Money raised will support the Shooting Star Children's Hospice and African Revival. The High Street will be closed to traffic until 9pm.

The Blessed Maid Marie

Saturday 28 November, 6pm, at St Luke's, Chelsea
A concert Advent by Concordia Voices, including Britten's *Hymn to the Virgin*, under the watchful eye of Musical Director Neil Ferris, with organist Alexander Chaplin. Tickets £12 (concessions £10) on the door.

Initiatives of Change

Tuesday 1 December, 7.15pm, Saving the Earth, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD
The Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, chairs the governing body of the St Francis of Assisi City Academy. He is also author of *Jesus and the Earth*, and founder of Faiths4Change, engaging faith groups in the transformation of the environment. There are light refreshments from 6.30pm. The talk is free, with a collection for expenses. To book places, please telephone 020 7798 6000

Annual Leaf Sweep and Gutter Clean

Saturday, 5 December, 9.30am, St James's Church
If you can spare the time, please help us to give the church its annual MoT. Buckets and brooms are useful.

The Wave: Stop Climate Chaos

Saturday 5 December, from 11am, Westminster Central Hall, London SW1H 9NH

In December world leaders meet in Copenhagen for historic climate change talks. We need them to commit to a fair climate change deal so that all God's creation can flourish. The day begins with a service, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury. The march begins from Grosvenor Square at 1pm, encircling Parliament at 3pm.

Christingle Service

Sunday 6 December, 9.30am, St James's Church

As ever, this annual service supports the Children's Society and 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 it or not, this fun and festive event has something for everyone. Money raised from it will help to improve the lives of thousands of children trapped in poverty around the world.

Looking out on the world



At the invitation of the Dean of Westminster, 26 of us, including Peter and Debbie, made a pilgrimage to Westminster Abbey. My first visit to the Abbey was some 40 years earlier when I came to this country and my husband, a Londoner, was showing off his city to me. My second visit was when members of the Twickenham and Richmond United Nations Association were invited to attend the service there to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the UN. That was a memorable occasion because of an inspiring sermon given by a remarkable Archbishop, Desmond Tutu. Very many countries were represented and striking national costumes were everywhere.

I am glad I decided to join the St. James's group for a third visit to the Abbey. Although we had been asked to meet at 6.15pm, I thought I would arrive early in order to explore this famous old building.

I arrived at the Great West Gate just as it began to drizzle and was asked by one of the 'gentlemen in red' to show him my ticket. I told him I didn't have one as I was part of an invited group who were going to meet later at the grave of the unknown warrior. 'That's fine, please go in,' he said, pointing me towards the Great West Door. 'It is where the red poppies are.' In I went, thinking to myself this was not a bad start.

Joining the many tourists in the Abbey, a lady (perhaps a sidesperson) approached me and asked me where I came from. I explained I came from Ghana. She said, 'Welcome, but we would like you to understand that this is a Christian church, Church of England, and first and foremost, this is a place of worship'. Unusually I was lost for words, mainly I think because I was wondering why I had been thought to be a non-Christian. Her manner was not offensive.

When the lady gave me a prayer booklet entitled *Pure Gold* and asked me to learn about the Christian faith by reading it, I began to feel that an attempt was being made to convert me to Christianity for a second time.

I was in two minds. Should I disabuse her of her assumption that I was of another faith, or none; or should I allow her to continue my 'conversion', which I was beginning to enjoy? Recalling her words that this was a place of worship, I admitted that I was a Christian and part of a group from St. James's. I was impressed when the lady took this information in her stride and started talking about the history of the Abbey. We also spoke about the environment and the future of the world.

Quickly sensitive to my background, my new friend explained the role the Abbey plays in working with individual Commonwealth countries to organise services to celebrate their respective Commonwealth days. She gave me by way of an example a copy of the order of service that had been

used to celebrate Ghana's last Commonwealth Day in the Abbey. She asked me whether I would like to read that order while I waited for my group, or prefer to join evensong as it was about to start. I thanked her and opted for the five o'clock evensong, which was attended by many tourists of different nationalities.

I listened with interest at the start of evensong to the announcement that Lucien Tapidi, a catechist from Papua New Guinea, was being remembered. He worked with Anglican missionaries who in 1944 had been ordered to leave the country. Tapidi took a stand in their defence and refused to abandon them. Sister Judith of the Abbey's staff told me that as a consequence he had been beheaded along with the missionaries. I was moved. His portrait is amongst the portraits of other martyrs outside the Abbey.

Canon Jane Hedges with her colleague Brett welcomed our group. She explained that many thousands of people were buried in the Abbey. They include Kings, Queens, poets, politicians and numerous others. Visitors are permitted to walk over their graves in order to move around the Abbey. The one exception is the grave of the unknown warrior, which nobody, including the reigning monarch, may walk over. Canon Jane explained the history and purpose of the impressive but simple memorial to the unknown warrior, who was buried there on Armistice Day 1920.

The guided tour started and finished at this grave. It included the Lantern (with its stunning vaulted ceiling), the High altar, the Quire (where a prayer was said for peace in the world), the Lady Chapel of Henry the VII (where we had compline), the tombs of Elizabeth I, Mary I and Mary Queen of Scots, the Coronation Chair and the Chapter House.

As a pilgrimage is a journey by a pilgrim to a sacred place for religious reasons, for me, as someone who came originally from overseas, this pilgrimage gave me a strong impression of the part that Westminster Abbey and the Church of England have played at the centre of England's national and international life over many centuries of history. I also found it very reassuring to see that in the life of the Abbey, where the old and the new are combined in such striking ways, there is strong evidence of the worldwide interests and nature of the Anglican community.

At this time of year when we remember all those who have fallen, it seemed particularly appropriate that the grave of the unknown warrior played such a prominent part in our pilgrimage. The last sentence on the grave sticks in my memory. It reads: *He was buried among Kings because he had done good toward God and toward his house.*

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Sancta Caecilia

This window was erected by the Grace of God in loving memory of William Singleton first organist of this Church Born 18 Jan 1852 died 15 April 1877

Saint Cecilia (Latin: *Sancta Caecilia*) is the patron saint of musicians and Church music because as she was dying she sang to God. Her feast day is celebrated on 22 November.



Originally built in the 1830s for St Peter's, Eaton Square, our organ was bought for £150 and installed in the new organ chamber in 1874.

Further information about the organ can be found on our website.

