

The Spire

FEBRUARY 2010

INSIDE:

Traveller's Tale
St Luke's, Tanzania

School's out!
The Jays profiled

Lent

Reflect, refresh, renew - prepare for Easter

The Spire

St James's Church
Registered Charity No 1129286

This Spire is produced nine times a year on behalf of the PCC of St James's Church.

We make no charge for this magazine but hope that you will contribute towards the production costs, enabling us to expand our important outreach across the parish.

If you are a regular reader please consider making an annual donation. Cheques should be made payable to 'The PCC of St James' and sent to Spire Appeal c/o the Parish Office.

Thank you.

GET IN TOUCH

STORIES, FEATURES

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WELCOME

February 2010



The new decade has certainly started in spectacular fashion with all the snow and difficult conditions.

This month the centre-spread features our Sunday School. Two of our long-standing teachers – Sarah Peterson and Lou Coaker – are standing down after many years of sterling work and this means we are facing a lot of new challenges to keep the Sunday School running smoothly.

The Sunday School is such an important part of our work and we hope we shall be able to maintain the quality of teaching in the future with new teachers. We shall be featuring Sarah and Lou's work in a later edition of *The Spire*.

We have changed one feature for 2010. *Our Church* on the back page has been replaced with *Songs of Praise*, telling the story behind a hymn we will all be singing in the coming weeks. We hope you will enjoy it whilst perhaps learning something new.

Best wishes

Janet

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UPDATES

Please tell us about any changes

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SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY

Sundays

- 8am Holy Communion
- 9.30am Parish Communion

7 February - 2nd Sunday Before Lent

- Genesis 2.4b-9, 15-end; Revelation 4; Luke 8.22-25

14 February - Sunday Next Before Lent

- Exodus 34.29-end
- 2 Corinthians 3.12-4.2
- Luke 9.28-36

17 February - Ash Wednesday

9.30am and 7.30pm

Holy Communion with Ashing

- Joel 2.1,2,12-17
- 2 Corinthians 5.20b-6.10
- John 8.1-11

21 February - 1st Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26.1-11

Romans 10.8b-13

Luke 4.1-13

28 February - 2nd Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18

Philippians 3.17-4.1

Luke 13.31-end

1st Sunday in month

7 February

9.30am All-age Communion

Mondays-Fridays (but not Tuesdays)

9.15am Morning Prayer

Tuesdays

9.30am Holy Communion

1st Wednesday in month

3 February

7am Commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month

4 February

2pm Holy Communion

THE LEADER COLUMN

LENT SHOULD BE A TIME TO REFLECT, TO START AFRESH, TO STRENGTHEN OUR FAITH

Feed the soul this Lent



Who am I?
Why am I here?
Where am I going?
What's it all for?

For some people these questions are answered easily.

Who am I?
A biological entity

Why am I here?

The product of the physical activity of two people, either by accident or design

Where am I going?

Nowhere – you're born, you live, you die

What's it all for?

This question is irrelevant – I just am for a period of time, and then that is that. No more need be said.

These answers can provoke different reactions:

Despair – if that's it, why bother?

Delight – so that's the point; get on with life as it is with no more worrying about the hereafter.

For other people this seems somehow inadequate. Is the world totally explicable purely in a physical sense? Is there nothing more to be said? Does the human tendency to look for more really tell us nothing? Is spirituality just a creation of human longing? Is it literally a delusion to make us feel better? Is it religion truly the 'opium of the people', as Karl Marx said? It deadens our pain in the short term, but ultimately is addictive and destructive?

Lent begins on Wednesday 17 February, Ash

Wednesday. This season of the Christian Year leads up to the celebration of Easter on Sunday 4 April. It is a time for reflection in preparation for the Easter feast. This year there will be the opportunity to explore some of the big questions about life and existence through a course St. James's during Lent. The *Start!* course will be offered for people to spend some time together in six weekly sessions.



Peter Vannozzi

The course is designed to help us:

- think through where we are going in our lives
- ask questions about the Christian faith
- discover the good news of Jesus
- consider how we want to respond to it and to him

This is all in an accessible way, in a home, with the use of a variety of material including a DVD. The dates and time are on page seven, along with contact details.

For some reading this, *Start!* will seem a strange word as Christianity has figured strongly in their life for years. It may be, though, that if that is you, a fresh exploration of your faith would nonetheless encourage and renew you.

For others, *Start!* may seem appropriate as you may have done some exploring and thinking, but would relish the opportunity for discussion in an informal setting. No questions are stupid, and again and again I find my own faith challenged for the better by the searching of others.

However you choose to spend Lent, I urge you to do so in a reflective spirit. It is so easy to let all time be the same – on it goes, relentlessly, but the Church invites us to give it light and shade, texture and colour. Enjoy these weeks as a spiritual springtime. The result? Perhaps action such as George Herbert (1593-1633), priest and poet, envisages in his poem *Lent*. It begins '*Welcome dear feast of Lent*' and ends:

***Yet Lord instruct us to improve our fast
By starving sin and taking such repast
As may our faults control:
That ev'ry man may revel at his door,
Not in his parlour; banqueting the poor,
And among those his soul.***

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

The Collect is a prayer near the beginning of the celebration of the Eucharist. Its function is fundamentally as a *collecting prayer*, drawing together the prayers of the people at the beginning of the Eucharist.

The current contemporary language collects have a strongly seasonal emphasis. This is particularly clear in Lent. There are two collects provided for each Sunday - one usually based on those in the Book of Common Prayer, and the other a completely new composition.

Here are some from the season of Lent which can be used as a prayer at home as a private aid to devotion:

Ash Wednesday

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing that you have made
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:
create and make in us new and contrite hearts
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.



First Sunday of Lent

Heavenly Father,
your Son battled with the powers of darkness,
and grew closer to you in the desert:
help us to use these days to grow in wisdom and prayer
that we may witness to your saving love
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Third Sunday of Lent

Eternal God,
give us insight
to discern your will for us,
to give up what harms us,
and to seek the perfection we
are promised
in Jesus Christ our Lord.



PLANNED GIVING INCREASE; CHARITY NEEDS STORAGE

At last, here's some good news about the economy

GIVING Parishioners are giving record amounts to their local churches, according to the latest statistics from the Church of England.



The total income of parishes increased by £70 million to £898 million, well above inflation. Total voluntary income rose to £485 million. At the same time, total parish expenditure rose to £838 million, with £50 million of this donated by parishes to charities. Dr John Preston, the Church's National Stewardship and Resources Officer, said: 'Giving to parishes by individuals continues to increase year on year, with the landmark figure of £500 million being reached for the first time. We have more than 630,000 people giving in a regular way, with nearly 90 per cent given through Gift Aid enabling parishes to reclaim £78 million from the taxman.'

BACK TO CHURCH The annual initiative for getting people back into the habit of church-going is gaining pace. Church of England churches welcomed back 53,000 people to the event in 2009, which was a 71 per cent increase on the year before. St James's took part in the initiative for the first time on Sunday 4 October, under the banner *Bring a Friend to Church Day*. In all, some 82,000 people 'came back' to churches across the UK.

'Help me to continue Peter's charity work'



TWAM It's two years since Janet Nunn became associated with Tools with a Mission, a charity that takes old tools, sewing machines and bicycles, repairs them and sends them to Africa.

She has spent that time helping Peter Perrin to organise the local collection, including many items from members of St James's. Sadly, Peter, from Whitton Baptist Church, passed away recently, but Janet promised him she would try to carry on the collection locally.

'My first priority,' said Janet, 'is to find someone who has an empty, lockable garage or shed that could be used for storing the tools, bicycles and sewing machines.' The garage also needs to be easily accessible to cars to unload, and to a van to move items to the charity's warehouse in Ipswich. If you can help please telephone Janet Nunn on 020 89796325, or email: janunnhh@btinternet.com.

CHRISTIAN AID Christian Aid has become the largest development agency in the UK to be awarded the Humanitarian Accountability and Quality Management Standard for its work in developing countries. The certification process saw the agency undergo audits in its British, Irish, Indian and Burkina Faso offices where policies, procedures, management processes and relationships with partner organisations and communities were scrutinised.



DAILY CUPPA Only boil as much water as you need (as long as you cover the element in an electric kettle). It might surprise you to know that if everyone boiled just enough water for their cuppa, the energy saved could power over three-quarters of the UK's street lights.



REGISTERS FOR NOVEMBER

NOVEMBER

Baptisms
(at confirmation)

22 Will Baglin,
Hampton Hill

22 Nicola Brown,
Stanwell

Confirmations

22 Will Baglin, Nicola Brown,
Joshua Gould, William
Hird, Natalie Keane, Henry
Nettleton, Lily-Ann Peterson and
Lauren Underwood

There were no
registers for December

School for thought

Susannah Nettleton explains why The Jays are so important to our church and to the wider community

The first records of the existence of a Sunday School at St James's are in the March 1885 edition of the church magazine, at which time there were 273 children 'upon the books'. The traditions and role of the Sunday School in the 19th century still have something in common with what our children enjoy today — having fun together — there are just not so many of them!

The church magazine continues: 'At the Sunday School Winter Entertainment, which took place in the Boys' School, on 5 January, the prizes were distributed and a bun, an orange and a bag of sweets given to each child. The Vicar gave an exhibition of dissolving views and comic scenes of the magic lantern.'

'It is proposed that the usual expedition to the Crystal Palace shall take place, if all be well, about the end of the month of May.' In the event, 292 children went on the trip and the Hampton Brass Band met the party at the train station on their return.

The Sunday School is now called **The Jays** as it takes the 'J' from Jesus and the 'J' from James. The Jays operate during the Sunday morning communion and have been in several locations. Twenty years ago the children were escorted down the road to Wayside. When that was sold they were to be found in a portable building in the vicarage garden. Now they are in our church hall.

The children are an integral part of the church community and contribute to its rich tapestry. One of the activities that they love above all is taking a story from the Bible and writing, directing and performing a play in a modern day setting. This has helped them to relate to the message and to understand how it fits into every day modern life.

It has been great to watch the children develop and grow within the church family. They have progressed to taking Intercessions and serving, and many years later to bringing their own children to church!

As the Sunday School at St James's enters a new chapter in its leadership, it seems a good time to explain just what it is that the children enjoy on an average Sunday morning by sharing the Nettleton family's experience.

We have four children, aged between nine and 15 years of age. They have been attending the Sunday School for 12 years... and entirely of their own volition!

For my husband Charles and me, four crucial aspects of the Sunday School's work stand out:

Differentiation in teaching There are currently two groups: one for children at secondary schools and one for the infants and juniors, with age-



Crafty: Lou Coaker lends a hand



Child's play: Sarah Peterson leads an arts and crafts project

appropriate activities and focus.

Being part of St James's The children lead intercessions, display artwork in the church and in the hall where it is seen by other organisations, act as sidespersons during the Crib Service, contribute to church fund-raising appeals and take part in the tea and coffee rota. On St James's Day they are in charge of craft activities and the soft drinks stand. They perform plays, sing in the children's choir or play in the orchestra and make Christingle oranges with the Guides.

Creativity, listening and questioning Children are encouraged to explore the gospel or Old Testament reading in creative child-led ways such as making a group piece of artwork or through drama. Children are encouraged to question and debate issues such as Creationism.

Drama is a very important area of self-expression and the children have created several dramas through improvisation, guided by their teachers. Again, these are child-led in focus.

Children feel valued as individuals — those in the older group each have their own special mug that they have hand-painted.



Are you sitting comfortably?: Lou Coker reads to the youngsters

It has been great to watch the children develop and grow within the church family... and to see some, many years later, bringing their own children to church.

Children are challenged to think of others and to be looking for ways to help others outside their own community.

Social activities, such as the film evening, help to generate thinking and ideas for a fund-raising activity publicised to the congregation.

Charitable fund-raising, the wider community and the world For a number of years, on the night before Mothering Sunday, The Jays have held a sponsored sleepover in aid of local, national and worldwide charities linked to the Lent Appeal. In the morning they serve breakfast to those coming to the Mothering Sunday services, a great outreach event on a day when many new families are in church.

In addition the children hold cake and bring-and-buy sales, make jewellery out of recycled materials to support the church's recycling theme, and hold a chocolate melt-down after Easter to make cakes to sell for charity.

The children go to many different schools within the area so their 'Sunday' friends are very special. Indeed the time they spend with each other has brought some memorable statements. At a picnic a child asked, 'Why has Jesus got shorts on?' The vicar thought he had been instantly promoted!



What's your view? Group discussion led by Sarah

They are also intrigued by the Big Bang theory and the story of Creation from the Bible, all of which illustrate the connections between scientific research and Christianity. Another issue was why Joseph was Jesus' father, but not as important as Mary or God.

Here are a few thoughts from the children on what they like about Sunday School:

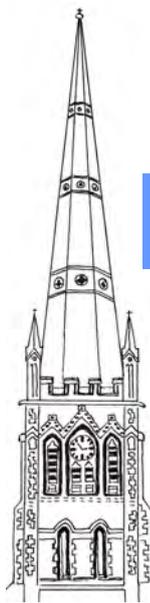
- 'I love socialising with my "Sunday Friends".'
- 'I love having a sleepover even though it is scary looking out at the graveyard at midnight and hearing the church clock chiming.'
- 'The *Caris* magazine is great as it is modern and hip.'
- 'I like hiding in the play house!'
- 'I love doing the puzzles and activities on the sheets.'
- 'I love acting in the plays'
- 'I like the stories being read to us and being able to read to the younger ones.'
- 'Just having our own space to discuss openly our thoughts whilst drinking tea and coffee is good.'
- 'I remember comparing the Holy Spirit to the wind: you know it is there, but can't see it, so you can play with bubble mixture and balloons to demonstrate this.'
- 'For me the best bit is fund raising for charities.'

Lou Coker, our Sunday School teacher for a staggering 19 years, has found it to be a very uplifting experience. She had no teaching experience so, to begin with, it was challenging trying to keep children with different ages interested. Getting them to talk wasn't a problem: not all talking at the same time was! They had some great joint lessons too.

Watching the older children spend time and patience with the younger ones as they have glue and paper stuck in the wrong places illustrates that we aim to impart caring and thoughtfulness as well as the traditional Ten Commandments.

It was moving to see four members confirmed in November and it was a great testament to the Sunday School for encouraging and energising the children to discover more about their faith.

Many thanks from our family to Lou, and Sarah Peterson — her fellow teacher for the past seven years — for giving our children so many challenging and exciting experiences and such a positive start to their Christian lives.



AROUND THE SPIRE

NEWS FROM HAMPTON HILL AND BEYOND

Confirmations mark first visit for Bishop Paul

The new Bishop of Kensington, the Rt Revd Paul Williams, pictured, paid his first visit to St. James's for a Confirmation Service on 22 November.

Our candidates were Will Baglin, Nicola Brown, Joshua Gould, William Hird, Natalie Keane, Henry Nettleton, Lily-Ann Peterson and Lauren Underwood.

Please remember them in your prayers as they continue their journey in faith, together with Andrew Parrish and Amanda Turner from St. Mary's, Hampton, and Rosie Clarke and Stephanie Haley from St. Richard's, Hanworth, who were all confirmed at the same service.



The Christingle service at the beginning of December was a happy family service at which we also remember those less fortunate than ourselves who are helped by the Children's Society. If you have not already done so, please return your candle collection box to church or the office as soon as possible.



Thank you to everyone who helped with flowers, the crib, decorating the tree, music, or in any other way before **Christmas**. It was wonderful to see so many people in church during the Christmas season, including friends old and new.

Several members of our church community and friends are going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land starting on 2 February. Please hold them in your thoughts and prayers. We look forward to hearing about their experiences in a later issue.

Twice the joy, twice the love, twice the blessing from above

Liz Butler, pictured with her newest grandchildren, Matilda and William, who were born on consecutive days last October. Matilda Rose Harriet (Smith) was Born at 9am on Thursday 29 October and William Michael Roy Butler was born at 5am on 30 October



both at Frimley Park Hospital. The two mums were in rooms on opposite sides of the corridor and the hospital staff were delighted that the cousins were born so close together. 'They told me it was a first' said Liz. 'Tilly developed an abscess on her chest so had to go back into hospital for a week, but is now a thriving baby. William is also doing well.'



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. The year also includes Saints Days, Festivals and Holy Days. These seasons and days make up the Christian calendar.

Lent is the time each year when we think about what it really means to be a follower of Jesus. Lent is an Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'lengthen' and happens in Spring when the days begin to get longer. The season of Lent begins during late February or early March and lasts for forty days before Easter, from Ash Wednesday to Holy Week. Although Lent is a serious time, Sundays are always a day of celebration in the Christian church and so they are not included in the forty days of Lent.

Answer the following questions using the above to help:

- What should we think about during Lent?
- What does the word Lent actually mean?
- When does Lent happen?
- Why are Sundays not included in the forty days of Lent?

Shrove Tuesday, or Pancake Day, is the day before Lent begins. 'Shrove' means being forgiven for wrong-doings. Long ago this was a day for feasting and having a good time. People would go to church to confess the bad things they had done and would be 'shriven' or forgiven before the start of Lent. Since rich foods, such as eggs, were forbidden during Lent, one way of using them up would be to make pancakes which we still do today.



Answer the following questions using the above to help:

- When is Shrove Tuesday?
- What does 'shrove' mean?
- What did people do on 'Shrove' Tuesday and why?
- What is another name for Shrove Tuesday?
- What did people do on this day and why?



Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent, six and a half weeks before Easter. Ash is left when something is burned, and the ash used on Ash Wednesday is made by burning the palm crosses that have been kept from last year's Palm Sunday. (Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, so when the crosses used in the last year's Palm Sunday service are converted to ashes, worshippers remember that defeat and crucifixion followed triumph.) The ashes of these crosses are then mixed with holy water (water which has been blessed) to make a greyish paste. In some churches, including St. James's, this ash is used to make the sign of a cross on people's foreheads.

We use ash as a symbol to show that we are sorry for the things we have done wrong and ask God for forgiveness. The ash cross shows that through Christ's death and resurrection, we can be free from sin.

As this is done, the priest says to each person:
*"Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.
 Turn away from sin and be faithful to Christ."*



Answer the following questions using the above to help:

- When is the first day of Lent?
- What is this day called?
- Why is it called this?
- What is ash?
- How is this particular ash made?
- What sign does the priest make on people?
- Where does the priest make it?
- Why is this particular sign used?
- What does the priest say to each person?

The Christian Year		
Season	Colour	Dates
Advent	Purple	Nov 29 - Dec 24 2009
Christmas	White	Dec 25 - Jan 5 2010
Epiphany	White	Jan 6 - Jan 31 2010
Ordinary Time	Green	Feb 1 - Feb 16 2010
Lent	Purple	Feb 17 - Apr 3 2010
Easter	White	Apr 4 - May 23 2010
Ordinary Time	Green	May 24 - Nov 28 2010



Revelations

Living Dangerously Again

In the summer of 1858 the 'great stench' in London became so overpowering that even those Victorians who believed that it was all in the natural order of things reluctantly agreed that the Thames was overloaded with sewage. Joseph Bazalgette, a brilliant civil engineer, was commissioned to resolve the problem. This he did by building huge sewers which intercepted the many waste outfalls and carried the untreated sewage to the lower Thames, where the tide was sufficient to carry it away. We still use Bazalgette's superbly designed sewers, and now we also treat the raw sewage before discharging effluent into the Thames.

In the winter of 1952 the 'great smog' shrouded London. It was so choking, and to many so deadly, that even those who thought it was all in the natural order of things agreed that burning untreated coal in hearth and factory must be stopped. So we have smokeless zones in most urban districts. People no longer choke to death in winter fogs.

The 2009 Copenhagen climate conference of 193 nations has ended, as many had feared, with very limited, weak agreements. Many voices, often speaking for oil or coal interests, proclaim that climate change is all in the natural order of things, and we will ruin our economy if we cap carbon dioxide emission. But these deniers do not live where the effects of climate change are already causing disasters. Will it take a 'great flood' in New York or London before we all agree that man-made greenhouse gases cause climate change? Will we then have time to prevent the biggest catastrophe that civilisation has ever known?

Thought for the Day

Thought for the Day is a BBC Radio Four programme scheduled for a few minutes at about 7.48am each weekday. It is usually delivered by someone with a professed religious faith, sometimes a religious leader, sometimes a lay man or woman. Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists, and representatives of the different forms of worship within the one faith have all spoken. Valued by many, it is criticised and derided by others. Some resent this tiny allocation of time to the 'god-slot', and atheists protest that they are never given a chance to put their point of view on the programme.

Anyone who listens regularly and seriously will almost certainly understand why the programme is worthwhile and also why most atheists would be inappropriate speakers in it, although their views may be valuable in a discussion. It is worthwhile because although the speakers have different forms of worship they all believe in a transcendent reality which guides us to a proper pattern of living, above all to respect and care for others of whatever faith. The message of every speaker of any faith is always a positive insight that their own belief has given them, never a negative comment on another belief.

Atheists' writings and talks seem largely to concentrate on why any religious belief, as they understand it, is wrong. They are essentially negative. Certainly they should be read and heard sympathetically, but their usual polemic is out of place in *Thought for the Day*.

Dick Wilde



St James's Theatre Club

- Thursday 11 February, *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime* Richmond Theatre, 7.45pm
- Oscar Wilde's delightfully daffy comedy with a deceptive vein of black humour. An all-star cast is led by **Gary Wilmot**, **Kate O'Mara**, and **Lee Mead**, fresh from *Joseph* and making his comedy debut.
- There are also discounted tickets available for:
- Thursday 4 March — *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* starring Peter Egan and Philip Franks.
- Tuesday 10 April — *Stepping Out*
- Thursday 13 May—*Witness for the Prosecution*
- 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.

Start! In Lent

- A six session course to explore Christianity together
- The course is open to everyone, from long-standing Christians to those starting out. It might help you to discover something new or to re-affirm your belief.
- Monday 15 February, 8pm — Life is for living
- Monday 22 February 8pm — Oh my God!
- Monday 1 March, 8pm — Jesus who?
- Monday 8 March, 8pm — What's gone wrong?
- Monday 15 March, 8pm — Dying to save us
- Tuesday March 23, 8pm — Into the arms of love
- The course will be held at the home of Alan and Jacky Cammidge. If you would like to attend, please telephone or email the Parish Office or speak to Peter or Debbie. For more information go to www.start-cpas.org.uk

Shrove Tuesday Parish Meal

- Tuesday 16 February, 7pm, *Piazza Firenze Restaurant*, 133 High Street, Hampton Hill TW12 1NJ
- A chance to celebrate together before the start of Lent.
- Two courses, plus a glass of wine, costs £15 for adults, or £5 for under 10s. If you would like to join us, please add your name to the list in church; telephone Liz Wilmot on 020 8977 9394, or email: elizabethwilmot@talktalk.net

Ash Wednesday

- Wednesday 17 February, 9.30am and 7.30pm, *St James's Church*
- Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent, the Church's solemn time of preparation for Easter. Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence, and in both services you may receive on your forehead the sign of the cross in ash.

Vicar's View



'I'm updating the rota notice board
rota rota ... do I see a hand...?'

Fairtrade Fortnight 22 February - 7 March

Only 10% of the tea sold in the UK is Fairtrade. Please help to turn Britain into a Fairtrade tea-drinking nation by:

- Buying only tea with the Fairtrade mark; and
- Challenging the big tea brands to switch more of their products to Fairtrade. You can help us by completing a *Make it FAIR* booklet (available in church).



Just A Song at Twilight

Friday 12 March, 7.30pm, and Saturday 13 March, 2.30pm and 7.30pm, *Clarendon Hall, York House, Twickenham TW1 3AA*

Join Cantanti Camerati and their musical director Geoffrey Bowyer. The theme is *Favourite Things*. Tickets £7 to £9, telephone 020 8898 8020 (from 6pm-7pm) to reserve.

Parish Quiet Day

Saturday 13 March, *The Anglican Benedictine Abbey of Our Lady & St John, Alton, Hampshire GU34 4AP*

Our parish quiet day will be at an abbey that has been described in *The Times* as 'the best kept secret in the Church of England' and as 'the place to go when you need six weeks' holiday, but can spare only a day'. There's an early start, leaving *St James's* at 7.30am to enable us to share in Communion with the community at 9am. If this is too early for you, please arrive at the abbey for 10am (it's about 80-minutes' drive from *St James's*). The day consists of two Lenten reflection sessions, at 10.30am and 2pm, led by a member of the community and with the chance to ask questions. We will also be welcome to join with the community for prayers during the day. You will need to provide your own packed lunch. The day ends at 4pm. The cost of the day is £23. Places are limited to 20, so do put your name down on the list at church or contact the Parish Office as soon as possible. We hope to find enough people willing to car-share.

Mendelssohn's Elijah Oratorio

Saturday 20 March, 7.30pm, *St James's Church*
Join Teddington Choral Society and musical director Geoffrey Bowyer with a full orchestra and professional soloists Lucy Thomas (Soprano), Tamsin Dalley (Contralto), Paul Martyn-West (Tenor) and Martin Johnson (Bass-Baritone). Tickets £12 (£10 concessions), call 020 8977 5986 or from Albert's Music Shop, Twickenham. www.teddingtonchoral.co.uk

Concordia's 10th Anniversary Concert

Saturday 17 April, 7.30pm, *St John the Divine, Kew Road, Richmond TW9 2PE*
Join Concordia, complete with a string orchestra, as they celebrate ten years with a programme including McDowell Ave Maris Stella and Dixit Dominus. Tickets £12 (concessions £10) on the door.

Women's World Day of Prayer

Friday 5 March, 2pm and 7.30pm, *United Reformed Church, 35 High Street, Hampton Hill TW12 1NB*
More than three million people worldwide will be praying and worshipping together using a service prepared by women in Cameroon, a country described as 'Africa in miniature'. Christians make up 60% of the population, but with more than 240 ethnic groups and languages Cameroon faces many challenges. Life expectancy is only 51 years and more than 60% of Cameroons are under 25. The constitution promotes equality between the sexes, but traditional rights and attitudes discriminate against women in many areas of life. Although giant steps have been taken towards assuring women's rights the struggle for peace, justice and integrity goes on.

More than just a hospital



St Luke's Hospital, Milo, in Tanzania, is a 50-bed hospital serving a population of 40,000. It has a ten-year-old vehicle, no mains electricity, no telephone, no public transport and it is a journey of 80 miles to collect or send mail. St James's Church has long supported the hospital and **Ann Peterken** has now achieved a long-held ambition to visit there.

Benaiah Kilwale is a well known name to parishioners at St James's. Born in Milo in 1941, he has worked as a clinical officer at St Luke's hospital since 1980. He was befriended by Hannah Stanton on his only visit to England in 1987, and I have continued our contact by writing since her death.

Staff shortages have long been a problem at the hospital because of Milo's remote, rural location. Lutherans established a mission station there in 1910, which passed to the Anglicans after World War I. Today, Milo has a population of about 4000 and is home to a 50-bed hospital and a Bible School, both run by the Diocese of South West Tanganyika.

The diocese very much wants to sponsor local people to study for medical qualifications, on condition that they then work at Milo for five years. It is looking for donors to assist with these training costs.

St James's supports general running costs of the hospital via the mission agency *USPG: Anglicans in World Mission*, making a donation each year from the charities budget.

When Benaiah asked if St James's could help with student sponsorships, I knew this was very important and quickly sought permission to go ahead with a targeted appeal to parishioners. I didn't know that I would be meeting him a few months later.

I and others at St James's had thought about visiting Milo, but its location in the south west corner of the country involves many hours of road travel – at least ten hours from Dar Es Salaam to the town of Njombe and then a three-hour drive from Njombe to Milo. The catalyst came at Easter last year when I heard of a friend's wedding in Malawi. If I was going to visit that part of Africa, I knew I had to visit Milo too.

By the time I left for Tanzania in August I was travelling with a huge amount of support and excitement – from Lesley's friend Angela Mullens, from Ven Christopher Wagstaff (a very special friend to Milo), from Bishop John and Benaiah in Tanzania, from staff in the USPG office,



from a church in Cheshunt that supports Milo, and from dear friends at St James's. And to top it all, I had my friend Jenny as a travel companion. This trip was meant to be.

As our coach approached Njombe, I was very excited. I knew that Benaiah was excited too. After so many years of writing to each other, it was truly joyous finally to meet. Benaiah and Bishop John Simalenga ate supper with us in our hotel and made us feel so welcome.

Up in Milo the following day, we were taken on a tour of St Luke's hospital. The three men in the photo above are the doctors who sustain its work – from left to right, Benaiah at 68 is the youngest, Simeon is 71 and Emmanuel is in his mid seventies and lovingly referred to as 'old man'. Only Dr Simeon can conduct surgery, but between them they cover a whole range of medical and dental problems – backed up by dedicated nursing and support staff.

These lovely men and all the staff are a marvellous witness of faith in action. The hospital serves a catchment area with a population of about 40,000 and greatly enhances the health and lives of many. Seeing the work in progress leaves no doubt as to why the diocese places such importance on staff training and recruitment – the sponsorship money so kindly given by many of you is being very well used.

Throughout our stay in Tanzania, Jenny and I were humbled by the kindness of our hosts. A highlight was being invited to supper at Benaiah's home, where we met his wife, several of his children and many grandchildren. We were delighted that Benaiah and Bishop John both contacted us

the evening we arrived back in Dar Es Salaam - to make sure all was well. We were dependent on and ministered to by others, thanks to being part of the Body of Christ that crosses any cultural or geographical boundaries.

There have been many wonderful moments since returning home – sharing news and photos, using the basket gift at Harvest Festival, letters and emails received, and friendship with two young ladies at USPG who visited Milo themselves last November.

In all of this I am again reminded that moving outside one's comfort zone can deliver blessings beyond imagination. I want others to share that experience, but am very aware that our carbon footprints cannot be ignored. By the way, for those of you in the know, Benaiah still rides a motorbike!

■ **We hope to welcome Bishop John Simalenga to St James's Church on 14 February.**



Songs of Praise

Forty Days and Forty Nights

The story behind the hymn

The first Sunday in Lent is synonymous with this hymn and it will begin the Parish Communion here at St James's on Sunday 21 February.

Forty days and forty nights
Thou wast fasting in the wild;
Forty days and forty nights
Tempted, and yet undefiled.

Sunbeams scorching all the day;
Chilly dew-drops nightly shed;
Prowling beasts about Thy way;
Stones Thy pillow; earth Thy bed.

Should not we Thy sorrow share
And from worldly joys abstain,
Fasting with unceasing prayer,
Strong with Thee to suffer pain?

Then if Satan on us press,
Jesus, Saviour, hear our call!
Victor in the wilderness,
Grant we may not faint nor fall!

So shall we have peace divine:
Holier gladness ours shall be;
Round us, too, shall angels shine,
Such as ministered to Thee.

Keep, O keep us, Saviour dear,
Ever constant by Thy side;
That with Thee we may appear
At the eternal Eastertide.

It is based on verses by **Revd George Smytton** (1822-1870), but altered by Francis Pott (1832-1909), with its emphasis on Christ's superhuman fasting and endurance during his period in the Wilderness.

After being baptized, Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights in the desert. During this time, the devil appeared and tempted him to demonstrate his supernatural powers as proof of his divinity, each temptation being refused by Jesus with a quotation from scripture. Having failed, the devil departed and angels came and brought nourishment to Jesus.

The number 40 is significant in Christianity for a number of reasons: rain fell for 40 days and 40 nights during Noah's flood; 40 years was the length of Israel's wandering in the wilderness; Jesus was presented at the Temple 40 days after his birth; and 40 days was also the period from Jesus' resurrection to his ascension into heaven.

Lent consists of the 40 days preceding Easter and should be a time of refreshment for our souls. At its end we ought to be stronger to resist temptation, our feet more firmly planted on the heavenly path, our faith more steadfast.

As Jesus went into the wilderness and there prepared for his ministry, as many times later he retired into the mountain or the desert to pray, and came forth strong to continue his work, so we shall be strengthened to follow in his steps.

