

The Spire

DEC 2010 / JAN 2011



INSIDE

Christmas services

PAGE TWO

Orphans in the
Holy Land

PAGE FOUR

Pilgrims' progress

PAGE EIGHT



Happy 
Christmas!

We warmly invite you to celebrate it with us

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 we 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

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NEXT ISSUE/COPY DEADLINE

The February issue is published on 30 January. All copy must be with us by Mon 3 January.

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When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.

WELCOME

Dec 2010 / Jan 2011



All the aspects of Christmas seem to have been in the shops for months. Now, finally, we are counting down to Christmas.

Apparently, the sale of religious Christmas cards has been much greater this year – which is very heartening. Our sale of Charity Christmas cards raised over £600 for six charities. Thank you to everyone who supported the sale.

Having written your cards you may be preparing to post. This year the Post Office's Christmas stamps feature Wallace and Grommit. You might like to know that you can also buy 1st and 2nd class Christmas stamps featuring the Madonna and Child – but you have to ask for them!

All the Christmas services are listed below and you will be very welcome at any of them.

On behalf of *The Spire* Committee I wish all our readers a Peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Best wishes

Janet

Janet Nunn, Editor

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For the latest news: www.stjames-hamptonhill.org.uk

Services for December and January Christmas at St James's

1st Wednesday in month

1 December

7am Commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month

2 December

2pm Holy Communion

5 December — 2nd Sunday of Advent

8am and 11.15am Holy Communion

Isaiah 11.1-10; Romans 15.4-13

Matthew 3.1-12

9.30am Christingle service

John 1.6-14

12 December — 3rd Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35.1-10; James 5.7-10

Matthew 11.2-11

19 December — 4th Sunday of Advent

8am and 9.30am Isaiah 7.10-16;

Romans 1.1-7; Matthew 1.18-25

6.30pm Carol Service

Friday 24 December — Christmas Eve

4.30pm Crib Service

11pm Midnight Mass

Isaiah 9.2-7; Titus 2.11-14; Luke 2.1-20

Saturday 25 December — Christmas Day

8am Holy Communion

(Book of Common Prayer)

9.30am Parish Communion

Hebrews 1.1-4; John 1.1-14

Sunday 26 December, St. Stephen's Day

(No 8am) 9.30am Holy Communion

2 Chronicles 24.20-22; Acts 7.51-60;

Matthew 10.17-22

There is no New Year's Day service

2 January — Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60.1-6; Ephesians 3.1-12;

Matthew 2.1-12

1st Wednesday in January

5 January There is no commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month

6 January

2pm Holy Communion

9 January — Baptism of Christ

Isaiah 42.1-9; Acts 10.34-43;

Matthew 3.13-17

16 January — 2nd Sunday of Epiphany

Isaiah 49.1-7; 1 Corinthians 1.1-9;

John 1.29-42

23 January — 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

Isaiah 9.1-4; 1 Corinthians 1.10-18;

Matthew 4.12-23

30 January — Candlemas

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

8am and 9.30am Malachi 3.1-5;

Hebrews 2.14-18; Luke 2.22-40

6pm Choral Evensong, Concordia Voices

OUR CLERGY



VICAR

Revd Peter Vannoizzi

Peter was born in Hanwell in 1962, but owes his surname to his Italian great-grandfather who came from Florence to the UK in the late 19th century.

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THE LEADER COLUMN

TRADITION HAS ITS PLACE AT CHRISTMAS, BUT ALLOW YOURSELF SOME SURPRISE

It's okay to be different



A few years back, the organist of St. Stephen, South Dulwich – where I was vicar at the time – came up with what seemed to me to be a novel idea for our Carol Service on the Sunday before Christmas. He proposed that we sing the carol *While shepherds watched their flocks by night* to the tune of the Yorkshire folk song *On Ilkley Moor Baht 'at*. I had mixed feelings about this. It did not seem quite right. After all, everyone knew that there was just one tune to this carol. Actually, no, there is not, and I discovered that not only did the suggested tune fit perfectly but that it was a hymn tune **before** the Ilkley Moor words were added. Check it on the internet if you do not believe me!

I was still a little concerned just in case someone had a go at the church door afterwards, and accused me of ruining their Christmas. (Such things do sometimes happen at church doors after services.) I need not have worried – the tune was a great success, and people sung the carol with smiles on their faces after the initial surprise.

Christmas is a time of custom and tradition and, for many, predictability. There is not much point going on in a Scrooge-like way, pointing out to people that customs we take for granted are relatively new, for we know what we know, and might not be interested in much else. Certainly not at a time that seems as conservative as Christmas.

Yet suddenly something can happen that shatters our conventions. It might be because someone with whom we have spent Christmas Day for years dies or moves away. It could be that a marriage or new relationship means that for the first time in what seems like a lifetime, that one day will not be spent with a loved one.

With all this, and the stressful build up, it is not shocking to discover that Christmas Day is notorious for being a day for rows. A survey of 4,000 households last year found that the first argument of the day happened, on average, at 9.58am.



Peter Vannozzi

This is a day that has to be perfect, and woe betide anyone who gets in the way of perfection!

Yet should we view Christmas through the same lenses each and every year? One thing that strikes me about the Christmas story is precisely its unpredictability, and its disregard of custom. The child born to be king is not laid in a bed in a royal palace, but in straw in a manger. The first revelation of this child's birth was not to the learned, the powerful or the rich, but to poor and despised shepherds.

The king who stood in the line of King David and had all the benefits of a tradition of faith to show him how to rule got it wrong, while wise men from who knows where got it right. Herod wanted to kill Jesus, but they

wanted to worship him. The greatest upset of all is in the very fact of the manner in which God chose to reveal himself – a vulnerable, human life. This life was the manifestation of love. In the newborn Jesus love came into the world in a recognizable, human form. It was to continue so, and lead to the cross.

So this Christmas, what will you and I do? There's nothing wrong with custom and tradition. That is, not unless it hinders us from knowing what we need to know. If we forget the topsy-turvy nature of the Christmas story, we will be missing out. Perhaps on Christmas Day do one thing different – have the first row at 9.59am! – and in doing so, recall just how surprising the Christmas story is. Maybe even sing this heartily to the tune it's (apparently) not supposed to have:

*All glory to be to God on high,
and to the earth be peace;
good will henceforth from heaven to men
begin and never cease.*

A very merry Christmas, and a happy 2011.

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

Though Christmas has been celebrated by the Christian Church from something like the end of the third century, the Christmas crib is much more recent. The crib – and the nativity play – probably owe their origin to **St. Francis of Assisi** (1181/2-1226.)

In 1223 he spent Christmas in the Italian town of Greccio. He recalled the visit he had made to Bethlehem some years before, and vowed to re-create the manger he had seen there. Francis did so with a real, live baby, hay, an ox and ass, gathered in a cave. The account says that the local townspeople came out to see the sight, and there was a joyful celebration of the birth of Christ. For Francis, there was a connection that could be called *Crib-Cross-Altar*. For him, in each place Christ poured himself out for the sake of the world, in love. In each Christ was the *poor Christ* – holding on to nothing.

This Christmas why not take a moment to consider the crib scene? It might be in a church or at home. You might have your own crib scene with figures or it could simply be a Christmas card with the scene depicted. Whatever the case, here are some prayers for use at the crib which can help us as we seek to celebrate Christmas spiritually too.

*Let us pray to Jesus our Saviour,
Christ, born in a stable,
give courage to all who are homeless.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.*

*Christ, for whom the angels sang,
give the song of the kingdom to all who weep.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.*

*Christ, worshipped by the shepherds,
give peace on earth to all who are oppressed.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.*

*Christ, before whom the wise men knelt,
give humility and wisdom to all who govern.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.*

*Christ, whose radiance filled a lowly manger,
give the glory of your resurrection to all who rest in you.
Jesus, Saviour,
hear our prayer.*

*Jesus, Saviour, child of Mary,
you know us and love us,
you share our lives
and hear our prayer.
Glory to you for ever. Amen.*

*O God the Son, highest and holiest,
who humbled yourself to share our birth and our death:
bring us with the shepherds and the wise men
to kneel before your holy cradle,
that we may come to sing with your angels
your glorious praises in heaven;
where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you
live and reign,
God, world without end. Amen.*

A REAL COMMUNITY EVENT + LEH CHOIR OF THE YEAR?

Tears of joy as opera night entrances audience

A very successful Family Opera Night, organised by Susannah Nettleton, took place in church in October. The queue to get in stretched down St. James's Road and the sell-out audience enjoyed a



wonderful evening of operatic excerpts performed by soloists from the professional opera group Bacchanale, together with the Hampton Hill Community Choir and the choirs of Hampton Hill Junior School.

Parent and singer Jacki Dibden writes: "A well-chosen repertoire of familiar and well-loved arias and choruses showcased the talents of this diverse group of singers and musicians. The Boys' Choir

were stunning in This is the Redeeming Guard from Carmen. Their accompaniment of Nessun Dorma moved many in the audience to tears (for all the right reasons), whilst the Cat Duet by Rossini caused laughter as the Girls' Choir miaowed and hissed their way through this musical comedy. Opera choruses were performed with great gusto by the Hampton Hill Community Choir and contained some inspired musical moments. The Hebrew Slaves from Nabucco was beautifully

lyrical and moving. The soloists were thrilling and the accompanists (string quartet and piano, under the direction of Miranda Ashe) were sensitive to soloists and choirs alike, and gave a lovely rendition of the Intermezzo from Cavallera Rusticana. It was a privilege for the children and adults to perform with these professional singers and musicians and a huge inspiration to all."



We extend our thanks to Susannah and her team for masterminding this event. There are more of Rajiv Sachdev's pictures on Hampton Hill Junior School's website www.hamptonhill.richmond.sch.uk

Lady Eleanor Holles choir strike a chord with judges

CHOIR
OF THE YEAR | 2010

■ Congratulations to The Lady Eleanor Holles School's chamber choir, *The Holles Singers*, conducted by Miranda Ashe (with Isobel Nettleton singing 2nd soprano), who have made it to the final of the BBC Choir of the Year competition. The group beat more than 150 other choirs to reach the final six. The final, at the Royal Festival Hall on 28 November, was due to be recorded for Radio 3 and BBC Four. The winner receives a trophy and a commission for a new choral work by a composer of their choice.



BBC One's first-ever dramatisation of the nativity

BBC One is to show its first ever UK television dramatisation of the story of the Nativity. Filmed in Morocco and two years in the making, *Once in Royal David's City* will be shown over four nights in the run-up to Christmas.

It's been scripted by *Life On Mars* writer Tony Jordan. The BBC promised a 'definitive story with all the wonder, magic and inspiration, whilst also telling a



less familiar tale of the love story between Mary and Joseph.' No transmission dates had been announced as we went to press.

REGISTERS FOR OCTOBER

Baptism

10 Oscar George Kingsnorth, Hampton Hill

Funeral

26 Violet May Coulling, 99, Hampton Hill

A shining light in a tense land



Debbie Oades reports from a school and orphanage near Jerusalem that is knocking down religious divides. Pictures: **Rob Oades** and **Alan Cammidge**

I first heard about the Jeel al-Amal (Generation of Hope) school in February 2009 when I was on a trip to the Holy Land as part of my post-ordination training programme. During our visit a fellow pilgrim joined us who had connections with the home. He spoke with such passion about the project that when I took parishioners from St James's Church on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in February 2010, I felt compelled to take us there. We took a donation raised by the Sunday school doing a play at Christmas 2009. Since then the charities committee has sent a further donation.

The school and orphanage was founded in 1972 by two Palestinian Christians, Alice and husband Basil Sahhar, in the village of Bethany to the east of Jerusalem. They were very aware that many families were struggling to look after their children in such poor social and economic conditions. Indeed, families were sometimes having to decide which children they could look after and which to abandon.

The prospects for children with disabilities were dire, predominantly due to social stigma rather than anything else; disabled children were often confined to one room and never allowed out.

At first the Sahhar's rented a room, but so many children were being brought to them, from many different agencies, that they bought a plot of land to expand. When they checked the land registry it was registered as 'the land of Jesus!' They soon outgrew the new site, leading them in the mid-1980s to their present buildings, which cater for both the school and the orphanage. The children come from poor families in Jerusalem and the towns and villages in Palestinian territories — and no fees are charged.

What strikes you within minutes of entering is the contrast between the lack of money and material

wealth with the richness of relationship and love. The buildings are, to say the least, basic, and if any of us ever suffer from housework blues, just spare a thought for the house mothers who look after the 100 orphanage children on a daily basis with smiles as wide as Cheshire cats.

One of the young boys who accompanied us on our tour of the facilities proudly showed us his room, directing us to the new shelves put up above their beds. 'I can now put my toy on the shelf', he explained via an interpreter. This toy was a teddy bear with an eye missing. Each child had just one personal toy, but it is not emotional tears that they crave. What they need is support.





McCabe Educational Trust, who organised our pilgrimage, support Jeel al-Amal. Through them I heard from Rachel, one of their summer activity volunteers. 'Having now spent three summers at Jeel,' she says, 'it is wonderful to see the children making so much progress year on year. One, whom I remember two years ago as a very angry and sad child, is now sociable, chatty and enthusiastic.

'Another child, previously reluctant to engage, this year came running with something to show us. An eight-year-old boy, who caused such havoc two years ago that we dreaded having him in the group, is now calmer than I could have imagined. He is now eager to do the right thing and can often be found helping others or showing them what to do.'

'Throughout the time we were working, there were a number of renovations taking place at Jeel. The whole of the boarding area was being painted, brightening up the place in a pink colour! The dining area also now has new fans, and again fresh paint. As ever, the children were involved each week in cleaning tasks, something that generates a sense of pride. There are a number of children, particularly the older ones, who are allowed to be helpers to the adults, and this has enabled some to feel a real sense of maturity and value.

'One child, who became my shadow last year, desperate for attention, is now proud to be the person who gets the drinks for visitors, and was a regular in the kitchen helping with chores! This again, is one of the many things that Jeel does to encourage individual children, and to ensure that each child has self esteem and pride in themselves.'



It is now Samar Sahhar, the daughter and eldest of the six children of Alice and Basil, who oversees Jeel al-Amal. Many of the adult male helpers are former boys of the home. When we visited, some of them had not been paid for six weeks, as urgent repairs had taken priority over their salaries — something they had agreed upon. We all found this extremely humbling, but once you have visited, you know you would have done just the same in their position.

Not only is this project important from a social

context, it is also vitally important from a Christian context. *The Holy Land* is a volatile area, and over the last century the Christian presence has been in severe decline. In Bethlehem, the Christian presence has dropped from 80% to 20% of the population. Nazareth is now overwhelmingly Muslim and in Jerusalem Christians number only 2%. The main fear is that the local Christian communities will disappear, and that the holy sites will be turned into museums with no supporting communities.

The bitterly divided Christian community in Jerusalem includes 4,500 Roman Catholics, 3,500 Greek Orthodox, 1,500 Armenians and 850 Protestants, according to the latest figures. In addition, about 2,600 Christian foreigners — mainly monks and clergymen — live in the city.

A low growth rate; economic struggles; housing problems; the security barrier separating Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born, from Jerusalem, the place of his death and resurrection; and the lack of peace have all contributed to the dwindling Christian presence in the city.

About two-thirds of the Jerusalem's 760,000 residents are Jews, and a third are Arabs, with the Jewish growth rate 1.8 percent, compared to 3% for the Arabs last year. Based on current trends, Jerusalem will lose its Jewish majority by 2035.

A visit to Bethany now requires a lengthy detour around the new Israeli security wall. When this wall is completed, Bethany will be separated from Jerusalem.

Jeel al-Amal is a Christian project that works with all, on a needs basis. More than ever we need to support the Christian presence in the Holy Land and the work that they are doing. Much of the witness of Christianity is now through community projects that aim to reduce tensions. To work with sacrificial love in such an environment — where violence often seems the only way of protest — is vital if there is to be long-term peace. Here is a project that not only shares in word and action the love of Jesus today, but is a light that shines of the coming of the kingdom of God.

I am leaving the final words in this feature to Najwa Sahhar:

Dear Revd Debbie,
Dear Friends at St James's Church

Thank you for keeping Jeel al-Amal in your thoughts and the kind donation of £500 you are sending to the boys' home through McCabe Educational Trust. We will let you know on what the money has been spent.

In the meantime please accept our warmest regards and best wishes on behalf of the children and staff of Jeel al-Amal.
Greetings to all members of the Church!

■ If you would like to support the school you can do so through The McCabe Educational Trust, 11 Hilgate Place, London SW12 9ER. Telephone 020 8675 6828. www.mccabe-travel.co.uk

NEWS BULLETIN

BE GREEN THIS CHRISTMAS: CONFIRMED AT ST PAUL'S

Another grandchild for the Nunn family!

■ Debbie and John Nunn

are celebrating the arrival of another grandchild. Sophie Rose was born to their daughter Suzanne and her husband Dan on 27 October — exactly a month after they celebrated the arrival of a granddaughter.

Suzanne, Dan and Sophie are pictured with the happy grandparents.



Top tips for a very Green Christmas

■ Are you dreaming of a Green Christmas? It is possible to have a happy Christmas AND think of the planet. Here are a few tips.

■ **Batteries** Christmas gifts often require batteries — and lots of them. As they contain toxic chemicals, they are difficult to recycle. Buy rechargeable ones instead.

■ **Cards** The Woodland Trust Christmas card recycling scheme helps fund the planting of thousands of trees every year.

■ A number of retailers, including M&S and WH Smith, will have drop bins in stores from January. You can also put cards, cardboard packaging and wrapping paper in your doorstep blue bin collection.

■ Christmas trees

Real trees are the more eco-friendly choice, as long as you get one from a sustainable source. Better still, use a live one.

■ Food on the plate of a typical Christmas lunch will have travelled 49,000 miles.

Turkeys from Europe, vegetables

from Africa, wine from Australia. Buy an organic turkey, it's more humane, support a market, or grow your own vegetables! Don't forget to take your own bags.

■ **Lights** Christmas tree lights left on for ten hours a day over the 12 days of Christmas produce enough CO₂ to inflate 12 balloons, so turn them off when they are not needed. If you want to be more environmentally friendly, try switching to LED lights or choosing lights that are powered by solar power or rechargeable batteries.

■ **Presents** Buy local or buy less, while minimising your carbon footprint. Do you have to buy gifts?

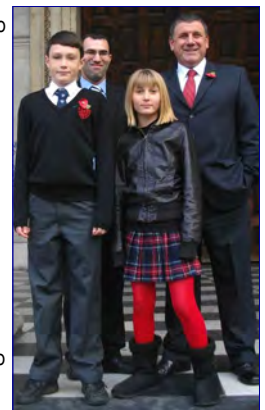
Could you buy an 'experience' instead? Try theatre tickets, memberships, or gift vouchers, or sponsor an animal, or buy some rainforest to protect.

■ **Recycle** We will throw out an extra 3m tonnes — that's five sacks per family — over Christmas. Much of it can be recycled. Don't waste your waste!



Four from St James's confirmed at St Paul's

■ **Nearly 70 people**, aged from ten to over 70, gathered at St Paul's Cathedral on Saturday 6 November to be confirmed. Seven of them were also baptised, and one candidate was received into the communion of the Church of England. The Bishop of Edmonton, the Rt Revd Peter Wheatley, presided and preached. Bishop Peter spoke of how the candidates had not so much the X Factor as the S Factor — the Spirit or Saint factor. As part of the service, candidates and congregation moved to the font at the west end of the cathedral — at which the baptisms took place — as a reminder of our common Christian journey. Congratulations to Anthony Anderson, Alan Cammidge, Alice Kittlesen-Clifford and Stuart Richardson from St James's. Please hold them in your prayers as they continue their journey in faith.





Advent, Christmas and Epiphany



Advent is the beginning of the Christian Year. The word Advent comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means arrival or coming and at this time we look forward to the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

Word Search

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

Jesus	Decoration
Emmanuel	Stocking
Christmas	Nativity
Carol	Play
Ivy	Excitement
Holly	Mary
Mistletoe	Joseph
Mulled	Shepherds
Presents	Angels
Cards	Baby
Crackers	
Tinsel	
Wrapping	
Tree	

The Season of **Christmas** is a celebration of the birthday of Jesus. The word Christmas (or Christ's Mass) comes from the old English word *Cristes Mæsse* which means the 'mass, or service, of Christ'.



This is a picture of a stained glass window showing Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus lying in the manger. Where can you see this window in our church?

11. Where did Mary and Joseph stay?

- At the local Travel Lodge
- In the best 5 star hotel
- In the stable of an inn

12. How did Mary keep Jesus warm?

- She covered him with an electric blanket
- She wrapped him in strips of cloth
- She put a lamb next to him

13. Where did Mary lay baby Jesus?

- In a double bed
- In a pram
- In a manger

1. What part of Christ's life does Christmas celebrate?

- His birth
- His death
- His resurrection

2. What does the word Christmas mean?

- A time to have lots of presents
- The 'mass, or service, of Christ'
- A holiday

3. Why do we shorten the word Christmas to Xmas?

- X is the first letter of Christ's name in the Greek alphabet
- It is quicker
- Because it is like a snowflake.

4. What Season is immediately before the Christmas Season?

- Lent
- Advent
- Epiphany

5. What is the special colour used in churches for Christmas?

- Red
- Purple
- White

6. When was Jesus born?

- About two thousand years ago
- Last year
- A million years ago

7. Who told Mary she had been chosen to have a special baby?

- God
- An angel
- Joseph

8. Where was Joseph's family from?

- Bethlehem
- Nazareth
- Jerusalem

9. Why did Mary and Joseph have to travel to Bethlehem?

- They were going on their annual holiday
- They had to pay a special tax
- They were going to a special pop concert

10. How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem?

- By Eurostar
- They jogged
- Mary rode on a donkey and Joseph walked

14. What is a manger?

- A feeding trough
- A barn
- A stable

15. Who came to visit Baby Jesus?

- Aunt Liz
- Some shepherds
- The doctor

16. How did the shepherds know about Jesus?

- An angel sent by God told them
- They had a phone call
- The wise men told them

17. Why is the 26 December called Boxing Day?

- Families are supposed to have boxing matches
- There was an old English custom of giving food and money, Christmas boxes, to the less fortunate members of the parish on this day
- Everyone puts out their old boxes for the dustbin men to take away



Epiphany is one of three major Christian celebrations along with Christmas and Easter. The name comes from the Greek *epiphaneia* meaning to show or appear. Epiphany is the time when we remember the coming of the wise men, Magi, (traditionally named Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) bringing gifts for the Christ child. Although they are sometimes called kings, the Bible tells us they were actually just wise men. There is no record of how many of them there were, but it is generally thought that there were only three because of the three gifts mentioned.

Above is a picture of a stained glass window showing Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus. The wise men are also shown. Where can you see this window in our church?



Revelations

A view of the wider world

Changing Perspectives

The developments in Afghanistan seem to signal the beginning of a climb out of the dreadful pit into which all the parties concerned have dug for themselves. The NATO countries led by America are almost desperate to get out without appearing to have lost the war. They know they cannot win decisively, nor bring a democratic government to the country. The Taliban also know that they cannot win a pitched battle, and their tactic of attrition is increasingly costly to themselves as well as NATO. Post-flood, divided Pakistan is suffering. We have reached that conflict stalemate where negotiations are the only sensible option. Already it is rumoured that unreported high-level talks are in progress. May the New Year bring us all a new hope for peace.

Islam and the Just War

Islam has its own rules for the just war, very similar to those formulated by Christian theologians. The Amman Message of 2004 was an attempt by 84 heads of state to redefine these in a modern context. It included the statement that acts of terrorism and suicide bombing were utterly non-Islamic.

Muhammed's son-in-law Ali, whose followers became the Shi'a, was a formidable fighter. It is said that after victory over an opponent in a sword-fight, he was about to deliver the final blow when the man spat in his face. Whereupon Ali sheathed his sword, saving his opponent's life. His amazed followers asked him for an explanation. He said that if he had slain the man after the insult it would have been an act of revenge, not justice.

The Newcomers

The new government is behaving rather like an eager new buyer of a ramshackle property which the agent might describe as having 'exciting possibilities for development'. Knocking down some ugly brickwork sometimes improves the place, but sometimes it unexpectedly causes the roof to collapse. Let us hope the government temper their enthusiasm for rebuild with caution. Let us hope also that they stop chanting the wearisome mantra: '...necessary because of the dreadful mess left by the previous government...', and that parliament becomes less like a squabble in Lord Sugar's *Apprentice* boardroom. But let us congratulate them on keeping the pledge on overseas aid.

The Fugitive

Somewhere between France and Switzerland it hides in a tunnel, surrounded by the world's most sophisticated detection devices. The finest brains in the world have been searching for it for over two years, but if they are any nearer to catching it they are keeping very quiet. Any breach of their security might put it on its guard. Some people think it will never be caught, and others doubt its very existence. It ranks with the Scarlet Pimpernel, Professor Moriarty and Lord Lucan in elusiveness. But perhaps as 2011 dawns our tireless physicists will at last feel the collar of the Higgs boson.

A New Year Change

I am truly very pleased to be able to announce that this column will be under new management next year. Starting in the February edition, Julian Reindorp has kindly agreed to take it over, and he will also write under a new title. We will all look forward to his column.

Dick Wilde

Christmas at St James's



Advent Evening Services

Sunday, 5 and 12 December, 4pm,
St James's Church

These services offer space and reflection as Advent moves us towards Christmas: a reflective act of worship, seen, each week, through a different person's perspective.

St James's Carol Service

Sunday 19 December, 6.30pm, St James's Church

Everyone is invited to help us celebrate Christmas and to join us afterwards for mulled wine and mince pies.

Christmas Eve

Friday 24 December, St James's Church

4.30pm Crib Service

Young and old are invited to join us for this most traditional of services as we tell the story of the nativity and prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

11pm Midnight Mass

The Christmas story begins as we celebrate its true meaning with readings and hymns

Christmas Day

Saturday 25 December, St James's Church

8am Holy Communion (Book of Common Prayer)

9.30am Parish Communion

St Stephen's Day

Sunday 26 December, 9.30am, St James's Church

Holy Communion for Boxing Day. No 8am service

Ice at the Palace

Daily until Sunday 9 January, Hampton Court Palace,
East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9AU



There are timed skating sessions throughout the day from 10am to 10pm. Ticket prices from £10 for adults (concessions £8) and £7.50 for children (under 16). The price includes the hire of skates. Booking is strongly advised, particularly around Christmas and New Year. Book in person at the palace ticket office, by telephone 0844 871 8815 or online www.hamptoncourtcice rink.com

Vicar's View



Do you think it's God's way of saying 'Thou shalt not illegally copy the carol service music'?

Annual Leaf Sweep and Gutter Clean

Saturday 4 December, from 9.30am, St James's Church

This is an important part of our maintenance that is undertaken by the Properties Committee.

All gutters of both the church and the hall are cleared of leaves that have built up over the year, after which the gutters and drain pipes are flushed through to ensure the free passage of water. The courtyard and car park are also swept of leaves.

The committee is looking for able volunteers to help. If you are free and would like to help, please contact Bryan Basdell, telephone 020 8979 2040 or 078 6782 9196 or by email bryan.basdell@uk.fujitsu.com.



Christingle Service

Sunday 5 December, 9.30am, St James's Church.

This annual service supports the Children's Society and is a chance to bring together children, family and friends, forge stronger links between church and schools and celebrate the Christmas message. Money raised at the service, and afterwards through collecting boxes, will help to improve the lives of thousands of children trapped in poverty.



Visitees' Tea party

Tuesday 7 December, 3pm, St James's Church Hall

The Visiting Team would be delighted to welcome anyone to come and chat to old friends who are not able to attend church as often as they would like. There will be as many cups of tea, sandwiches and cakes as can be eaten!

VCG Community Carol Concert

Wednesday 8 December, 6.30pm, St James's Church

This annual concert, organised by the Hampton and Hampton Hill Voluntary Care Group, features a programme of carols, readings and music. Admission is free, with a retiring collection. Mince pies and mulled wine will be available after the service in the church hall.

Teddington Choral Society's Festival for Christmas

Saturday 11 December, 7pm, St James's Church

The programme will include Henry Purcell's *Jubilate Deo in D* and *Welcome to All the Pleasures - an Ode for St Cecilia's Day*, Hubert Parry's *My Soul, there is a country* and Edward Elgar's *The Poet's Life*, as well as carols for choir and audience accompanied by organ, piano and trumpets. Tickets £9/£7, available from Albert's Music Shop, Heath Road, Twickenham TW1 4BN, on the door, or by telephoning 020 8977 5986.

Carols by Candlelight

Saturday 18 December, 7.30pm, Landmark Arts Centre, Ferry Road, Teddington TW11 9NN

Join the ever-popular celebration of Christmas with the sounds of Surrey Brass in a festive programme of seasonal music, words and song. Mulled wine and mince pies will be available. Book early, it's always sold out! Tickets £12/£6 under 16s.

Cantanti Camerati's Christmas Concert

Saturday 18 December, St Mary Magdalene Church, Paradise Road, Richmond TW9 1SN

Join Geoffrey Bowyer for a seasonal concert. Christmas carols and songs featuring choir, brass ensemble, hand bells and audience participation.

Wren's 'heaven on earth'



Above: our pilgrims. Right: the dome. Left: surviving raids during December 1940



It is inspiring to know that a church has stood on the site of St Paul's since 604, when it was founded by St Mellitus. The cathedral still soars high above most of the buildings on the London skyline, hopefully directing the prayers from within this place of worship up to Heaven. It was, at one time, when it was a gothic building with a spire, probably the tallest building in Europe.

I was curious to discover what makes this cathedral such an inspiration to many people. The great West doors, weighing one ton each, are not opened for mere mortals such as us. Standing inside, in front of these doors the first thing that struck me was the racks of votive candles flickering in the gloom. Here is a corner in a busy building where, despite all the people, you can give some private thought to the person for whom you are lighting the candle.

The first moment of still calm. Here too, at the beginning of the Nave is a memorial in the floor to St Paul's Watch, those who during the blitz kept a nightly vigil to ensure that bombs did not start a fire and destroy the cathedral.

At the time of re-building after the great fire, the high altar was hidden from view by a quire screen. This was removed in the 1800s. There is now an altar under the dome and this is where regular services take place. Behind it is the high altar, organ and quire (where the choir and clergy normally sit during services) stalls. The area behind this was hit by a bomb during the Second World War and when it was rebuilt it was made a memorial to the American forces who fought alongside us. The pages of the Book of Remembrance are turned daily and as we are all equal in the sight of God, the names are in alphabetical order rather than by rank.

The cathedral was built by Sir Christopher Wren (1632 – 25 February 1723), one of the most highly acclaimed English architects in history. He was responsible for rebuilding 51 churches in the City of London after the Great Fire in 1666 — including his masterpiece St. Paul's Cathedral, completed in 1710.

Our guide told us the story of Wren asking a workman to find him a stone to mark the spot, at floor level, of the centre of the dome high above. The stone bore the inscription *Resurgam*, which translates as *I will rise again*. This is an amazing statement of our faith and relates to the cathedral itself, which has been rebuilt several times. We stood on this spot, aware of the faith and prayer of all those who had been here before us.

The cathedral had little in the way of adornments or memorials when it was first built. A memorial to John Howard, a prison reformer, was the first memorial permitted in the then new cathedral. Many have been added since with that of Wellington being the grandest. Sir Winston

Churchill (1874 – 1965) is remembered by a set of gates in the crypt. These depict the various aspects of his life, including assegaais – the traditional weapon of the Zulus. This was a reminder for me of my birthplace. The gates were installed in 2004. Churchill was one of only three people to have a state funeral at St. Paul's.

The crypt is the largest in Western Europe and, unusually for a cathedral, is the exact footprint of the cathedral floor. Also in the crypt is a memorial to Sir Bartle Frere, one time governor of the Cape of Good Hope and later prominent in India. This proved to be a place for me to stand and reflect on another period in my own life – history has always been a fascinating subject for me.

Most people come to see Admiral Lord Nelson in his barrel of brandy! He lies at the centre of the crypt, directly beneath the middle of the dome. His monument includes a call to national prayer that he wrote while in view of the enemy before the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, his final battle. His coffin had already been made for him from the mast of a ship in one of his earlier victories. His body had to be preserved for the journey home, so it was put into a large wooden barrel, covered with French brandy and topped up with spirits of wine and camphor at Gibraltar. Nelson's funeral took place at St Paul's on 9 January 1806, where he was interred beneath the black sarcophagus originally made for Cardinal Wolsey in the early 16th century.

Wren is buried in a quiet corner of the crypt and remembered with an epitaph written by his son. He exhorts the reader: *If you seek his monument look around you*. A plaque nearby remembers the crafts people who helped build Wren's dream.

Some of us climbed to the Whispering Gallery while others went up the spiral staircase to get a view of London and be above the lead roof of the dome. God must surely have been guiding Wren when he was planning this magnificent House of Prayer.

We were fortunate to be able to sit in the quire stall for Evensong. I sat next to a lady whose son sang the solo in the anthem. Now 12, he has been at the school since the age of eight. She told me a bit about the boys' lives. Apparently, after the Christmas services the families can join the choirboys for Christmas lunch.

The service sheet reminded us that Evensong combines the offices of Vespers and Compline. Time for all of us to reflect on this great place, built for the glory of God. The psalms were perfect for the end of our visit. Psalm 8 reminded us: O Lord our Sovereign how glorious is Thy name in all the earth. A fitting end to an inspiring visit.



Songs of Praise

The story behind the hymn

Hark the Herald Angels Sing



Hark the herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild
God and sinners reconciled"
Joyful, all ye nations rise
Join the triumph of the skies
With the angelic host proclaim:
"Christ is born in Bethlehem"
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ by highest heaven adored
Christ the everlasting Lord!
Late in time behold Him come
Offspring of a Virgin's womb
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see
Hail the incarnate Deity
Pleased as man with man to dwell
Jesus, our Emmanuel
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'n-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings
Ris'n with healing in His wings
Mild He lays His glory by
Born that man no more may die
Born to raise the sons of earth
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing
"Glory to the newborn King!"

This must rank as one of the best-known Christmas carols. The words are from the pen of Charles Wesley (1707-88), pictured, leader of the Methodist movement with his brother, John. The words were first published in 1739 with the opening line reading *Hark! how all the welkin rings* meaning 'sky' or 'heavens.'



It was only in the 19th century that an adapted tune by the great composer Felix Mendelssohn became attached to it.

The carol is typical of Wesley's hymns in being both something that will teach people, but also lead them to worship. The words celebrate the fact of Christ's birth, but then go on to state his identity. He is king, 'Emmanuel,' Prince of Peace, Sun of Righteousness, the 'incarnate deity.' The person singing the carol is left in no doubt as to the Christian understanding of Christ. Christmas is shown to be about Christ.

The carol will be sung at St. James's on Christmas Eve at the Crib Service, and on Christmas morning, not to mention other Christmas celebrations in December.