

'If only every day could be Christmas, Daddy', said my daughter, ripping to shreds in wild excitement something that had taken ages to wrap up with paper, bows, and frilly bits. I groaned inwardly, what a prospect! And then of course in my adult way I rationalised my dread 'Well of course darling it would soon get pretty boring if it were'. But that is just exactly the point. Christmas is God's 'if only'.

It takes a child's fantasy to make much sense of the idea of Christmas. Gifts, going out in the dark to church, streamers, extravagant meals, reindeer and Grandma in a paper hat. Only a child's vision and wonder can make the whole thing hang together. Watch a child's eyes, listen to a child's squeal of delight and then try to rationalise: it will do you no good whatsoever. Instead, stay with those wondering eyes and shrieks of delight. They are the key to this 'if only'.

'If only' we could see with those wide eyes and sing with delight; stop and enjoy and wonder. 'The children really enjoyed it, Vicar' - but can't we also allow ourselves to enjoy Christmas, like a child? Can we form a picture in our minds and hearts of how things could be? How things could be every day, how things are every day? Have we really impoverished our lives to such an extent that we can no longer gaze, no longer feel thrilled and loved, no longer rip open a present with glee, no longer see the crib with a sense of expectancy?

Christmas is God's 'if only' - if only we could let ourselves see that God has used and uses the fantastic, the irrational, the unpredictable, the childlike as well as our so rational and so adult world. God takes the form of a baby. Come and hold the baby in wonder in church this Christmas, allow yourself to be held in God's hands. Come and hold out your hands to receive God's gift of himself in bread and wine.

God's 'if only' is fulfilled in the birth of a baby in a dank and smelly stable, our 'if only' is to allow ourselves to realise it, every day.

Brian Leathard

Advent Collection for CMS

In the year 1990/91 St. James's Church will be donating £3,500 to various charitable causes both at home and overseas (for details, see the Notice Board in church). We try to maintain a continuity of giving to those organisations that we support, but inevitably fall short of funds to give to all of them. This year we have not allocated any funds to the Church Missionary Society, with which we have had a long standing association through the overseas work of Margaret Cranston.

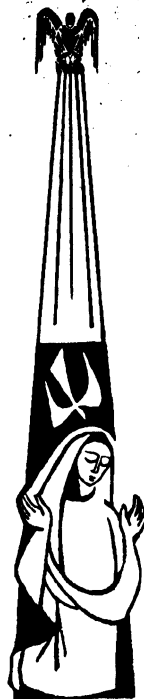
During the four Sundays of Advent a special plate will be placed in the church for the CMS. Please help to make this a worthwhile collection.

Ann Davis

ADVENT LITANY

Lord Jesus,
you are the light of the world:
Come, Lord Jesus.
You are light in our darkness:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Son of God, save us from our sins:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Bring hope into the lives of all people:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Give your peace to all nations:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Be the joy of all who love you:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Bless us as we gather in your name:
Come, Lord Jesus.
Lord Jesus, stay with us:
Come, Lord Jesus.

*May Christ give us his peace and joy,
and let us share them with others.
All praise and glory are his for ever.*



AMEN

A reminder:

PARISH QUIET DAY

10.30am to 4pm, Saturday 8 December,
Convent of the Sisters of the Church, Ham

Led by The Revd. Canon John Halliburton of St. Paul's Cathedral

Find space and time for a truly quiet day amidst the headlong rush towards Christmas.

Sign the list in church or contact the Vicar.

Letter to the Editor

I am unhappy about an item in the October issue of *The Spire*. It is the notice about the Ministry of Healing which appears at the bottom right of the centre pages of the magazine. I feel I cannot let the wording of the first paragraph of that notice pass without comment.

What worries me is the relationship between prayer and 'positive thinking'. The way this paragraph puts it seems to suggest that prayer is nothing more than one aspect of positive thinking, or at least on a level with it.

I believe that prayer is something quite different. Positive thinking, all the insights of psychology and all the knowledge of medical science are tools which God has given to man to help himself. They are great blessings.

But prayer is altogether greater than these. It transcends them all. If people come in trust to lay their troubles on the Lord, thus consciously acknowledging that they are dependent on a higher authority, God can give them his healing direct, without recourse to any of those other tools.

In answer to our faithful prayer he might lead us indeed to learn about positive thinking. He might inspire us to read certain books, to try certain diets the list is endless. He might also bless us with healing simply because we dare to come to him in prayer.

Hilde Bucknell

Hilde's letter to the Editor worries me that others besides her may have taken my words as they were not meant.

Certainly I do not confuse prayer with 'positive thinking' which, as I see it, is an attitude of mind and not of spirit.

I do not like that expression which is used by so many people today. Perhaps it was not the way to express the state of mind which could bring to the helpful Ministry of Healing those who have not yet come to seek help from prayer and blessings where two or three, or more, are gathered together in the Lord's name.

For myself I find much help and strength when I come to the peace and concentration of the Thursday evening services.

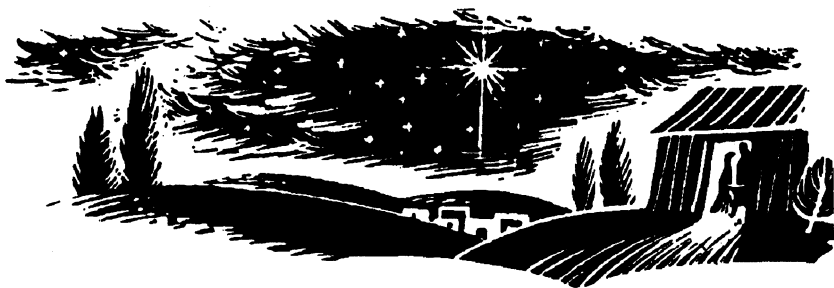
I am so glad that Hilde still connects with us and send her my best wishes.

Alison Thompson



The Ministry of Healing forms a part of the Holy Communion Service at 7.15 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land



It is very difficult after a holiday to remember what you thought the place would be like before you went. But whatever we had thought turned out to be a poor reflection of the reality. First of all the weather was marvellous, warm, even hot, clear blue sunny skies. And an incredible feeling of being where what we had read so much about all our lives actually happened. For some of us there had also been huge misconceptions - some had always imagined Mount Moriah to be somewhere out in the desert, but no, it is the mount on which the Dome of the Rock Mosque now stands in Jerusalem, the place where Abraham prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. We knew, of course, that 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' were synonymous, but that did not stop some of us from thinking of Mount Zion as being a long way from Jerusalem, when again it is a part of that very city itself, although now outside the walls of the old city.

Because of the recent troubles in Jerusalem there were very few tourists about, which was a bonus for us. Yet at no time did we feel in any danger. It did mean, however, that we could not visit Temple Mount where the Dome of the Rock Mosque is situated, and it was considered by our excellent guide, Oliver, after consultation with the local people, that a visit to the Shepherds' Fields near Bethlehem would be too dangerous.

It was while we were visiting the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem that an incident occurred which became for all of us the highlight of the holiday. We entered a rectangular-shaped cave lit by forty-eight lamps and we felt we were standing in the very birthplace of Christ. A silver star with the latin inscription 'Hic de Maria Virgine Jesus Christus natus est' (Here Christ was born) marks the spot. A little to the right down a couple of steps lay the Holy Manger. The primitive rock, blackened by the smoke of candles and lamps, may be seen above the manger.

Whilst our guide was telling us the history of the church, a most moving, yet simple, event happened. Completely oblivious to our group a young mother came into the cave with a baby in her arms and a small child held by the hand. After kneeling in prayer she gently laid the baby onto the centre of the star for a few moments as an act of faith and then quietly left. I am sure we were all affected by this act, so simple but beautiful.

The days in Jerusalem were packed with many exciting sights and sounds, not to mention the lovely spicy smells of the suk. Coming back in the evening to Jerusalem in the rapidly failing light after a memorable day out was truly unforgettable. We were

travelling along the old Roman road from Jericho with the desert all around us - time had stood still here. The emptiness of that wilderness, with only an occasional Bedouin camp, was indescribable - something that really has to be experienced.

Soon we were in Galilee: we had floated in the Dead Sea, now we swam in the very different waters of the Sea of Galilee, and later, again in the evening, we came across the choppy waters of the lake by boat. A warm, stiff breeze was blowing, and the engine was silent, as we sang, and read the Biblical account of Jesus stilling the waves.

The peace around us was all too brief. We had started our final day with a Eucharist on the shore; now we finished it on the water. Truly an unforgettable experience.

Some of the Pilgrims



Christmas Arrangements

Friday	21 December	7.30pm	Carols round the Parish
Saturday	22 December	10.30am	Carols at Sainsbury's, Hampton (Hampton Council of Churches)
Sunday	23 December	6.30pm	Parish Carol Service
Christmas Eve		4.30pm	Blessing of the Crib
		11.45pm	Midnight Eucharist
Christmas Day		8.00am	Holy Communion
		9.30am	Parish Communion
Wednesday	26	10.00am	Holy Communion
Thursday	27	10.00am	Holy Communion
Friday	28	10.00am	Holy Communion
Epiphany (Sunday)	6 January	9.30am	Christingle Service

Four of our local schools and the Scout Group are also having carol services in our Church - see Dates to Note. All are welcome at all of these services.

Parish Housegroups

Several housegroups are now meeting regularly in the parish following a programme, called 'Concourse', of topics relating to everyday life in the modern world. Discussion is stimulated by open-ended questions. There are no prescribed answers. Each meeting will consider a different subject, and, as the subjects are not taken in any special order, one can join a group at any time. The groups have only been meeting for a few weeks and would welcome other members. They meet fortnightly on the following days:

Mondays:	8.00pm at 68 Park Road, Hampton Hill	979 7042
Tuesdays:	8.00pm at 40 Gloucester Road, Teddington	977 4909
	8.00pm at 19 St. James's Road, Hampton Hill	979 6865
Wednesdays:	10.30am at 68 Park Road, Hampton Hill	979 7042
	9.00pm at 103A High Street, Hampton	979 1810

A long-standing group also meets on Wednesdays at 10.30am at 30 Burton's Road, Hampton Hill (943 1336) and is, in part, following the same programme.

If you would like to know more, please contact the Vicar or ring one of the above telephone numbers. Do join a group.



'My Dear child' by Colin Urquhart,

published by Hodder and Stoughton, price £5.99.

Although this seemed an expensive paperback, I found it to be worth every penny. Those who are used to Colin Urquhart's inimitable style and appreciate it will be truly delighted in this his latest work. He reveals aspects of our Lord's nature - his love, grace and mercy, and also talks to us of God's wrath, justice and judgement. He writes as God's mouthpiece which greatly encouraged me in my spiritual life. The book challenges us. It opened my eyes and made me look at myself and my life anew. I know it will be something I shall keep at hand and turn to again and again, listening to God's heart as the author intended.

Janet Jeffries

Singing of Carols Round the Parish

Friday 21 December at 7.30 pm.

Do come along and join in.

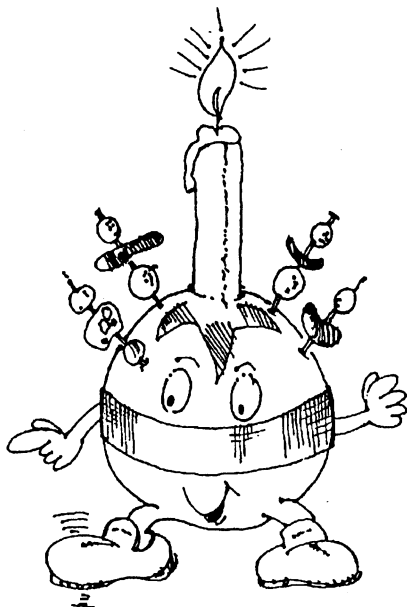
Hot drinks and mince pies will be available
at the end of the evening.

Make an Orange Speak

When the disciples rebuked parents for bringing their children to be touched by Jesus, he spoke out for them, saying: 'Let the children come to me; do not try to stop them; for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.' (Mark 10.14)

Today, The Children's Society is speaking for children and young people through its work throughout England and Wales. In court, for example, the Society speaks for children in custody disputes by making sure their views are heard. For young people who have run away from home, the Society helps them to rebuild a relationship with their families. Where children are given no choice by the care system, the Society intervenes on their behalf.

So what's all this about oranges? Here's a clue! When is an orange like a caring Christian? Answer - When it's a Christingle!



A Christingle is a powerful symbol of the Light of Christ in the world; a Moravian church custom dating back to the 18th century and introduced into the Anglican Church by The Children's Society in 1968.

To make a Christingle, you take an orange to represent the world and tie round it a red ribbon, the blood of Christ. Four cocktail sticks, decorated with fruit, nuts and sweets, are stuck in the orange to represent the seasons of the year and the fruits of the earth. In the top is placed a candle, representing Christ, the light of the World.

At a Christingle Service, everyone is given their own Christingle and invited to offer money they have raised for The Children's Society. That money, along with all the money raised at thousands of other Christingle Services in churches, schools and cathedrals this Christmas, will help the society to continue its important work, speaking on behalf of children and young people: and making lives worth living. That's how you can make an orange speak!

A Meditation

'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs, their soul is Christ's abode.'

What is this secret? 'The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things that are revealed belong unto us . . . that we may do all the words of this law'. But what is the secret, the key to unlock the kingdom of heaven, the key to pureness of heart, to being able to see God?

What is revealed in 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is upon you'? This word, repentance, in its use lies the secret. Repent was the command before the advent of Christ. Repentance was to make preparation for his coming, to make a straight way, with no hindrance in it, for him to come, and for people to come to him with no let or stay. So repentance is a vital word, in it lies the key.

It does not mean being vaguely sorry for our sins and owning up to them in ritual to receive a ritual pardon; it does not mean agonising over our transgressions, confessing them with tears even, and doing nothing else, and then repeating the exercise over and over again. It means being so sorry, so full of regret, so burdened, that we determine to leave the path our feet are on, to break free from the endless treadmill and set our feet on a new way and our eyes on higher horizons. The moment we make this decision - honest before God, the moment we take this first step, we meet with Christ our Redeemer and Saviour and become followers of his way. He is our need, for however earnest our determination, however strong our will, we can never 'go it alone' but, mercifully, we do not have to, for our Saviour is at hand to walk with us. He has redeemed us.

Repentance, true, honest, active repentance, using all our will and leaning on the understanding, helping, all-powerful strength of the ever-present Christ - this word repentance holds the key, opens the gate of glory.

'Lord, we thy presence seek; may ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart, a temple meet for thee. Amen.

Margery Orton

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M.U. Evening Discussion Group

Supper Party, 8pm, Monday 3 December, Wayside

Bring a dish and enjoy a relaxing evening

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Sponsored Knit

As the result of the sponsored knitting held in October, a cheque for £212 has been sent to the Arthritis and Rheumatism Council for Research. A total of 100 squares were knitted and these will be sent to the same charity to be used in the making of blankets. I am most grateful to all of our knitters and to all those who sponsored them so generously.

Vera Rockliffe

Around the Spire

This month we congratulate two married couples who have good cause for celebration. Margaret and Bill Robinson have recently had their Golden Wedding Anniversary and we send them our love and best wishes. Both Bill and Margaret have contributed much to life in and around Hampton Hill as well as to their own family, and we rejoice with them.

David and Jane Revill were recently married in St. James's and are already entering into the life of the parish. We wish them long life and much happiness in their life together.

Olive Wright has spent three weeks in hospital recently after a fall. She is now recovering and we send her our best wishes.

Mrs. Alice Churchill is also in hospital. She would like to thank all the kind friends for the Get-well cards following her untimely accident, and for the beautiful Birthday cards she received.

Please remember all those who are unwell in your prayers.

Scout News

Two patrols of Scouts took part in the District Day Prowl near Shere, coming second and fourth out of 44 patrols. The Cubs were represented at the District Swimming Gala, Cubs and Beavers held a joint Hallowe'en Party and the whole Group was involved in the annual Firework Party.

This year, the Group's Carol Service will take place in the Church at 6.30 pm on Wednesday 12 December. All are welcome.

Susan Horner

From the Registers - October

Baptisms

7	Benjamin David Brockbank	14 Westbank Road
	Daniel Luke Watson	131 Rectory Grove

Marriage

6	Anthony John Evans and Elaine Jones
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Funerals

3	Elizabeth Mary Ann Dudley	8 Longford Close	Aged 86
8	Wallace Owden	45 Laurel Road	Aged 80
18	Frances Elsie Umney	Laurel Dene	Aged 83

Regular Weekly Services

Sunday	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Parish Communion (except first Sunday in month)
Monday to Friday	09.15	Morning Prayer
Tuesday	09.30	Holy Communion
Thursday	19.15	Holy Communion (with Ministry of Healing on the first Thursday in the month)

Other Services and Dates to Note

Dec.	1	09.30	Churchyard Working Party
	2	09.30	Children's Eucharist
		18.30	Choral Evensong
	3	14.00	Editorial Board, 19 St. James's Road
		20.00	M.U. Evening Discussion Group Supper Party, Wayside
	4	20.00	Tuesday Club: Mr. T. Davie's prizewinning photographs, 'Nearly as large as Life', Wayside
	6	20.00	P.C.C., Vestry
	7	14.30	L.E.H. Junior School Carol Service, Church
	8	10.30	Parish Quiet Day, St. Michael's Convent, Ham (to 16.00)
	9	18.30	Prayer 'n' Praise
	11		Dedication Festival for our Church
		19.30	Rectory School Carol Service, Church
	12	18.30	Scout Group Carol Service, Church
	13	19.00	Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Service, Church
	16	18.30	Choral Evensong
	18	14.00	Clarendon School Carol Service with Richmond Brass Ensemble, Church
		20.00	Tuesday Club: Christmas Party, Wayside
	21	19.30	Carols round the Parish
	22	10.30	Carols, old Sainsbury's (Hampton Council of Churches)
	23	18.30	Carol Service
	24		Christmas Eve
		16.30	Blessing of the Crib
		23.45	Midnight Eucharist
	25		Christmas Day
		08.00	Holy Communion
		09.30	Parish Communion
	26		St. Stephen
		10.00	Holy Communion
	27		St. John
		10.00	Holy Communion
	28		The Holy Innocents
		10.00	Holy Communion



Advance Notices

Jan.	1	The Naming of Jesus
	6	Epiphany
	09.30	Christingle Service