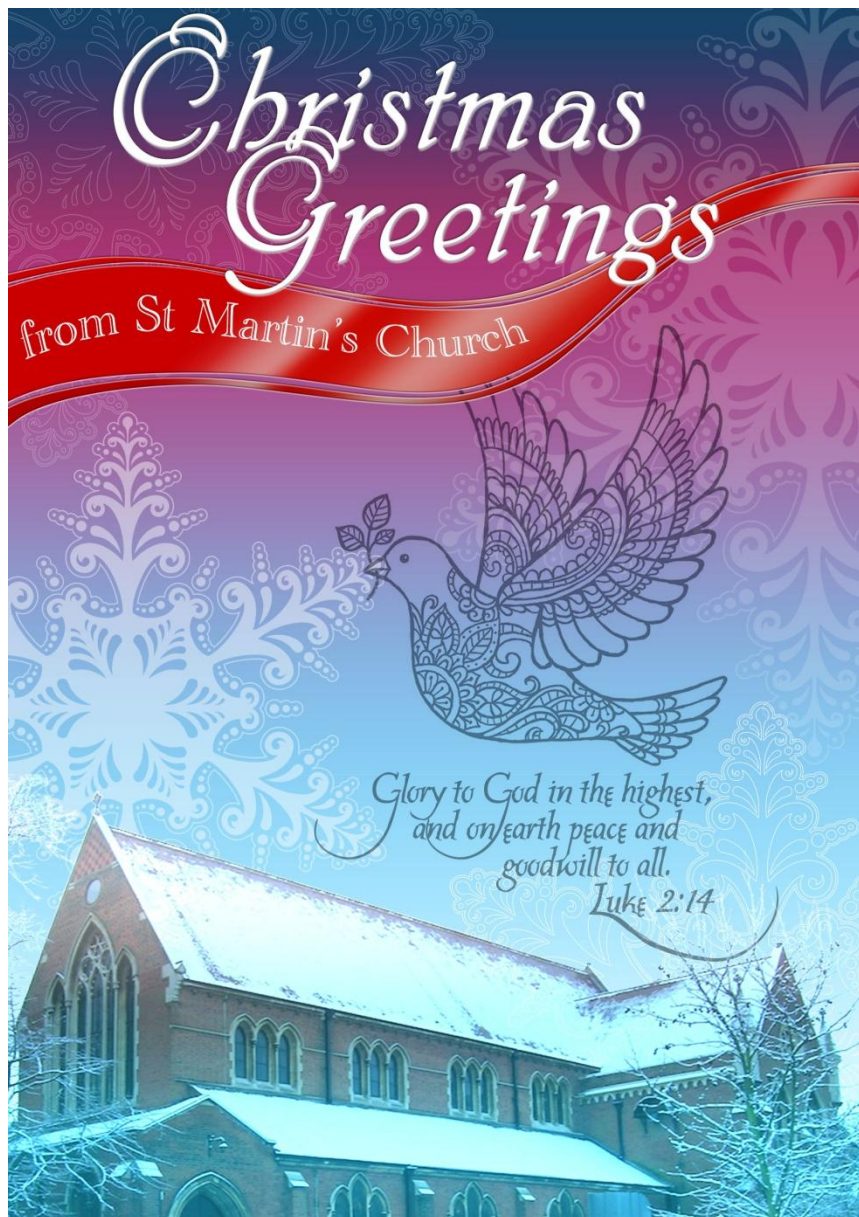


ST. MARTIN'S MONTHLY

December 2015

50p



St Martin's Church, Hale Gardens, London W3 9SQ

(Registered charity no. 1132976)

www.stmartinswestacton.co.uk

Email: stmartins@stmartinswestacton.com

The Vicar The Rev'd Dr Nicholas Henderson
(also Chaplain to Acton Care Centre)
020 8992 2333

SSM Assistant Priest The Rev'd Brandy Pearson
(c/o Parish Office)

Permission to Officiate The Rev'd Robert Pearson

Commissioned Lay Minister to Japanese Anglican Church UK
Mrs Yuki Johnson (07572 324107)
yukifunakawa@btinternet.com

Parish Administrator (weekdays: 9.30am – 1.30pm)
Parish Office, rear of Church Hall,
Hale Gardens, W3 9SQ
020 8992 2333

Reader Dr Margaret Jones (020 8997 1418)
Reader Emeritus Mrs Lynne Armstrong (020 8992 8341)

Commissioned Lay Minister Mrs Jacqueline Nicholls (c/o Parish Office)

Churchwardens Mrs Liza Ambridge (020 8992 3029)
Mr Jeremy Thorpe-Woods

Deputy Churchwarden Mr John Wilson (c/o Parish Office)

Director of Music Mr Kenneth Bartram (c/o Parish Office)

Magazine Editor Clive Davis (clive.a.g.davis@btinternet.com)

The Vicar is available for consultation and enquiries by appointment.
Please ring the Parish Office.

Articles for the next month's magazine should be sent to
Clive Davis (email: clive.a.g.davis@btinternet.com)

They should reach the Editor by 14th December.

The January magazine will be on sale by 27th December

Cover design: Ben Mason

Why can't we have Christmas in July?



That's the title of my talk at 8pm on Thursday 17th December in the Parish Room when our educational programme under the heading of 'St Martin's Foundation' concludes the programme for the year.

It's a fair question and should you happen to be sitting on Bondi Beach in Australia this Christmas (don't laugh some parishioners will be) it might seem rather strange to see Father Christmas and reindeer and Christmas trees in the blazing antipodean summer sunshine?

Some facts first: no one knows the real birthday of Jesus. No date is given in the Bible, so why do we celebrate it on the 25th December? The early Christians certainly had many arguments as to when it should be celebrated. Also, the birth of Jesus probably didn't happen in the year 1AD but slightly earlier, somewhere between 2BC and 7BC (there isn't a 0AD - the years go from 1BC to 1AD!). The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336AD, during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor).

A few years later, the then Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus would always be celebrated on the 25th December. It was probably an early example of what we call 'inculturation' where Christianity accommodates to the prevailing culture of the time and Christianizes it as it were. There are lots of examples of this including pagan Christmas trees (first introduced to Britain by Prince Albert in the 19th century from Germany). It would now be almost unthinkable not to have one in church at this time of year. Anyway the Church in the early fourth century cleaned up the Roman Midwinter festival of Saturnalia and *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti* (the day of the unconquered sun and winter solstice) and made it holy for us.

So what are we to make of the season? The first thing is to celebrate with confidence because the birth of our Saviour is special and holy. It is so because it leads to Christ's ministry and eventual death and resurrection, which is at the heart of our faith.

Consequently, Christians should resist secularism, which might try

and de-Christianize the season with titles such as Winterval (first begun in Birmingham in the later 1990's). This is done supposedly in the name of not offending other faiths. In reality other faith groups are perplexed as to why Christians might want to devalue their festival when for many of them, the world of Islam included, they too want to celebrate what for them is the birth of a great prophet.

Secular humanism, which is now a strong aspect of our modern society in this respect may lean for the exercise of law and order on the so-called Judeo Christian ethic but it is profoundly misinformed about the nature of Christianity itself.

To be fair this may be partly because the Church, and sometimes sadly the Church of England also, gives out such a negative message it can put many people off. It so often appears to be against things rather than endorsing the liberating Gospel of love that Jesus proclaimed. It is beyond me to address this problem except to notice that at least, after long and halting progress, we have finally come closer to recognising the role of women and their leadership in the Church. Our own former Archdeacon of Northolt in the person of Rachel Treweek this year became for example the first woman diocesan Bishop of Gloucester – my original sponsoring home diocese.

Ironically, it is another woman, Mary the mother of Jesus, who figures prominently at this time of year and who can doubt the close and special relationship between mother and child? Perhaps also we can at this point incorporate the close relationship that we have with God as Father (and not inconceivably mother – God doesn't actually have a gender) brother, Saviour and friend. It seems to me that that is Gospel or 'Good News' and if we add the angels' message as well 'Peace on earth good will to all' Luke 2 v 14, then Christmas begins to make sense in a positive way.

So why can't we have Christmas in July? We could, as it's only an historical accident that has placed it in the month of December, but there's still every reason why we might joyfully give thanks to God both this December and each and every day for giving us the gift of his Son Jesus Christ.

I wish you every blessing for a happy and holy season.

Nicholas

Introducing Brandy and Rob.....



Hi! By way of introduction, I thought I would provide a short history of Brandy Pearson (that's me). Born and brought up in Southampton and trained as a graphic designer in the days before the invention of the personal computer.

I married Rob, moved to London, worked in the book trade and had two children (Benedict and Alexandra). I job-shared with Rob while they were small, made redundant and was unemployed. What were we going to do next?



We went on holiday to North Wales, started to go to church – baptised and confirmed in Rochester Cathedral. Rob felt called to ministry. We all moved to Oxford and Rob trained at St Stephen's House. We then moved to Stoke Newington in North London and I trained to be a spiritual director. We moved to Haggerston in the East End, I trained to be a Reader and despite my best intentions I eventually accepted the idea that I too might be called to priesthood.

Rob became a Prison Chaplain in HMP Wandsworth. We moved to Wallington near Croydon and I trained for ministry with the South East Institution for Theological Education. Rob moved to HMP Pentonville and I went to St Thomas, Finsbury Park for my curacy as NSM while working as Administrator in the chaplaincy at HMP Wandsworth.

I got a full-time post as Assistant Priest in Parish of Acton Green where I stayed for eight years. Now, semi-retired, I have come to St Martin's and live in your beautifully refurbished Cottage, with Rob and three cats.

As for my interests, among the church stuff – spirituality and human flourishing – I would love to start a contemplative prayer group. I love making stuff, writing poetry and prose, listening to music (especially the blues), walking, reading, watching movies and good TV especially science fiction and fortiana.

Brandy Pearson

On Message Group

The On Message Group will re-start on Sunday December 13th at 11.15am (after the Parish Communion). Everyone is welcome to join in. The Group will be led by Revd Rob Pearson and will meet in the church, over coffee, every second Sunday of the month. The group will discuss varied theological, social and ethical questions for Christianity. You can submit questions in advance (anonymously if you wish) via the message box. You can then join the group which may discuss the questions posed.



"Tsunami" Concert



A very successful classical concert was held in St Martin's on All Saints Sunday 1st November. The proceeds went to the Tsunami and Earthquake fund. St Martin's has been linked with Sendai Anglican Diocese of Tohoku for many years. The Tsunami and earthquake were particularly devastating in that area.

Pictured left to right: the Vicar, Yoshiko Endo (piano), Manna Ito (soprano) with Yuki Johnson, Commissioned Lay Minister to the Japanese Anglican Church (UK) that meets monthly in St Martin's.



News in the Deanery...

Our Vicar, Nicholas, has been asked to be a 'Surrogate' for the Ealing Area. There are a number of surrogates in London at least one for each Episcopal Area. The Canons 123 and 128 of the Church of England lay down the qualifications and regulations for that Office. A Surrogate acts as a deputy for the Bishop within the Deanery. At present the chief duty of the Surrogate is to grant and issue marriage licences (often complicated international cases).

The new Area Dean of Ealing is the Rev'd Steve Newbold of St Stephen's Ealing.



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ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS

AT ST MARTIN'S

Sunday 6th December

6.30pm: Advent Carol Service



Sunday 13th December

10am: Children's Nativity Play

In the context of the Parish Communion

11.15am: On-message group meets



Sunday 20th December

6.30pm: Service of Nine lessons and Carols

Followed by minced pies and mulled wine



Thursday 24th December

4pm: Children's Carol Service

11pm: Midnight Eucharist



Friday 25th December

8am: Holy Communion

10am: Parish Communion

(No Evensong)

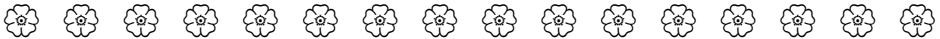
The Church Flowers

At this time of year when the gardens are bereft of colourful flowers we can be thankful for all those who provide and arrange the church flowers throughout the year. We thank Liza Ambridge, Betty Anderson, Liz Barnes, Tara Bramwell, Bryony Franklin, Gill Hull, Jackie Nicholls, Angela North, Camilla Reid and Susie Thorpe-Woods.

The Flower Rota for December:

27th November – 9th December
11th December – 23rd December
23rd December – 4th January

Liza Ambridge
Tara Bramwell
Camilla Reid and Liz Barnes



A Christmas Message from Angela Doe

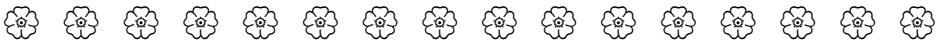


To All,

Unfortunately, I shall be unable to write Christmas cards and hence Season's Greetings for Christmas and the New Year.

Thanks for all your support during the past year.

Angela Doe



Letter to Father Christmas?

Dear Father Christmas,
This Christmas could you please send me a yellow door.
Yours, Sherlock Holmes

Watson: So why do you want a yellow door Holmes?

Holmes: Lemon-entry, my dear Watson.

St Martin's Foundation Lectures



The vicar is seen here with Fr. Aphran Ozan of the Syrian Orthodox Cathedral in Acton, who gave us a lecture on the plight of Christians in the Middle East on Thursday 20th November. Fr Aphran replaced the advertised speaker who was indisposed.

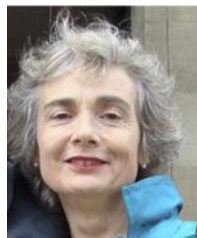
Forthcoming talks

Lectures take place at **8pm on Thursdays** in the Parish Room
(entrance via Parish Office, to rear of Church Hall)



Why can't we have Christmas in July? A radical and fresh look at the season. 17th December 2015

The Rev'd Dr Nicholas Henderson reflects on how Christmas, traditional and modern, came about, what is the biblical provenance and how we might make something really worthwhile of this time of the year.



Matthew, Mark, Luke and John Spirituality in the four Gospels. 18th February 2016

The Rev'd Georgiana Heskins has a BD and Mth in Biblical Studies from King's College, London and trained for ministry at Westcott House in Cambridge. She is an Honorary Minor Canon of Southwark Cathedral, currently ministering in the parish of St John the Evangelist, Waterloo. She has worked on the Ignation Spiritual Direction Course based at the London Spiritual Centre and is currently completing a Post Graduate Diploma.

For further details: www.stmartinswestacton.co.uk

Looking ahead

Sunday 3rd January 6.30pm: Epiphany Carol Service

Sunday 31st January 10am: Candlemas Family Service



Order of St Mellitus

Clive Davis receiving the St Mellitus Medal in recognition of his long service to the Diocese of London. The Rev'd Dr Nicholas Henderson presented the medal on behalf of the Bishop of London, together with a letter from the Bishop thanking Clive for his contribution to the life of the Diocese.



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Memories of Bonfire Night

Despite the rain beforehand it was dry for the bonfire party and a good time was had by all.



Lots of lovely food thanks to Jackie Nicholls.

A real guy thanks to Summer and Zac Marshall Phillips.



A tremendous bonfire thanks to Michael Franks and Rob Pearson.

The Confirmation Photograph



The Confirmation candidates with the Bishop of Willesden and Margaret Jones, Reader.



Rudolph the Red

There was once a great Czar in Russia named Rudolph the Red. He stood looking out the window of his palace one day while his wife, the Czarina, sat nearby knitting. He turned to her and said, "Look my dear, it has begun to rain!" Without even looking up from her knitting she replied, "It's too cold to rain. It must be sleet." The Czar shook his head and said, "I am the Czar of all the Russias, and Rudolph the Red knows rain, dear!"



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The Wednesday Coffee Club



Last month the Coffee Club held a themed Edwardian party on 11th November. This month you are all invited to their **'Eve of Christmas Eve party'** at 11.30am on Wednesday 23rd December.



St Martin's Music Society



Brian Davis and Gina Kruger performed in St Martin's on the evening of Sunday 22nd November. St Cecilia is the patron saint of music and the evening was arranged on behalf of St Martin's Music Society.



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The Great War – 100 years on

Continuing to tell the story behind the names on our War Memorial.

In 1885 John Edwards, a clerk married Fanny Marchant. When their first son, William was born in 1888, they were living in Tufnell Park. By 1891 they had moved to Faraday Road, Acton. In 1892 **Llewelyn Marchant Edwards** was born, followed Bernard Wallace in 1894 (also killed in action later in the war). By 1901 the family (now with four children) were living in Grafton Road, Acton. They were living in Lynton Road by 1911. Their eldest son, William Cecil was now in India – he was a police officer and married Mary Helm in Bombay, 1915. Llewelyn and Bernard were "Boy Clerks" in the Civil Service.

Llewelyn enlisted with the London Regiment (Civil Service Rifles). His military service is unclear. The army records show Llewelyn died in December 1915. However no battle is recorded for his unit in that month. The records state he was 'killed in action', only giving the place of his death as being 'The Western Front'. He most likely died during an action between large battles. It is possible that he was either killed in the weeks following the battle of Loos or in the weeks following action at the Hohenzollern Redoubt.

His battalion became part of the 47th division. The division saw action in the battle of Loos in September, 1915. The British fired 250,000 artillery shells with very little effect, releasing 140 tons of Chlorine Gas to help the infantry in their advance. The wind changed direction and 2,600 British soldiers were affected. British munitions ran low which eventually resulted in the Germans recapturing Hohenzollern Redoubt in October 1915. In November, another planned attack was abandoned due heavy rain and accurate shelling from German artillery. British casualties amounted to around 50,000.

Lance Corporal **Llewelyn Marchant Edwards** died on 21st December 1915, aged 24. He has no known grave and his name is inscribed on the Loos Memorial which forms the sides and back of the Duds Corner Cemetery. Dud Corner Cemetery stands almost on the site of a German strong point, the Lens Road Redoubt. The name "Dud Corner" is due to the large number of unexploded shells found after the Armistice. The Loos Memorial commemorates over 20,000 men who have no known grave.

100 years after his sacrifice:

We remember him.

Bubble and Bulbs

The Ealing Common Society successfully applied for a grant from the Bubble Fund, which encourages residents to enhance their local environment. As a result, they held a Family Bulb Planting Event in



Warwick Dene recently. It was a huge success with 1,000 daffodils, 500 English bluebells and 100 snowdrops being planted within an hour. The planters ranged in age from 14 months to 83 years. The Grange Pub generously agreed to serve free coffee, tea and cookies to the planters afterwards, which was much appreciated. The photo shows some of the

planters at work. For more details, please see "Around Ealing Extra" www.ealing.gov.uk/blog/index.php?path=blog/AroundEaling/post/116



The Ealing Common Society was founded in 1991 to foster, preserve and protect the facilities and amenities of Ealing Common. Membership is £2 per household per year. For further details contact the membership secretary, Pat Mellor: itncnature@aol.com (0208 992 0173)



Alyson Barnett-Cowan visits St Martin's



It was good to have Alyson Barnett-Cowan back with us on Remembrance Sunday. Here she is demonstrating one of the new style Christingle boxes as was used at the Christingle Service at the end of November.

Story behind: Good King Wenceslas

Each year at Christmas we sing about good King Wenceslas looking on the Feast of Stephen. Did you ever wonder who on earth he was?

This carol was 900 years in the making and started with a brutal murder in Bohemia.

Wenceslas was a real person, the Duke of Bohemia, who lived in the early 10th century. He seems to have been a rare ruler, in that he was just and had compassion for the poor. His goodness made him enemies, and when he was only 22, he was assassinated on the steps of a church in Prague in 935.

But that was not the end of Wenceslas. Deeply mourned by the common people, he was soon considered a martyr and a saint. A cult of Wenceslas grew up in Bohemia, influencing the High Middle Ages idea of the *rex Justus* – or ‘righteous king’ – that is, a monarch whose power stems mainly from his great piety.

The story of Wenceslas came to England sometime before 1853, when Queen Victoria’s envoy to Stockholm sent some rare books to a friend, John Mason Neale, Warden of Sackville College, East Grinstead. Here Neale found the story of Wenceslas in an ancient poem by Czech poet Václav Alois Svoboda. Neale published his translation as a carol in 1853. He made the ‘Duke’ into a ‘King’, as a later Pope had conferred the regal title on Wenceslas.

The carol tells the poignant story of a young king and his page braving harsh winter weather in order to bring food, wine and fuel to a poor peasant on the Feast of St Stephen (26th December). The journey is terrible, and the page only gets through by following in the king’s footprints, step by step, through deep snow. There are themes here of following Christ, through suffering, to do good to the poor.

If the story is ancient, so is the melody that Neale chose for his carol as it goes back to Finland in 1582.

Good King Wenceslas... today, a millennium after his brutal murder, he is still remembered in Prague, where a statue of him stands tall in the middle of Wenceslas Square. His goodness is not forgotten.

St Martin's, West Acton, London



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Usual Sunday Services

8am: Holy Communion

10am: Parish Communion

6.30pm: Evensong

Our Junior Church meets in the Church Hall at 10am
except when there is a Family Service.

The next Family Service will be on January 31st.

The 'On-Message' Group meets every second Sunday of the month.

Over coffee the group discusses various issues for Christians.

The next meeting will be December 13th at 11.15am

Our Youth Group meets every Tuesday at 7pm
in the Parish Room (rear of Church Hall)

Japanese Anglican Church UK

meets every third Sunday of the month:

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