

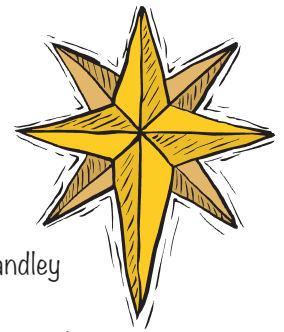


The Seeker

December

2011

Christmas



The church magazine for **St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew and St Rumbold's, Pentridge**

Who's who?

Vicar

Rev Mel Durrant
The Vicarage,
Sixpenny Handley
01725 552608
rev.mel@handleychurch.org.uk

Curates

Rev Paul Skinner
01725 552785
Rev Dr Michael Foster
01258 830764

Churchwardens

St Mary's with
Gussage St Andrew

Chris Stokes 552672
Carole Wyatt 552572

St Rumbold's, Pentridge

Mary Ferguson 552222
Jane King 552231

Licenced Lay Minister

John Cullingford 516453

Lay Pastorial Assistants

Ted Cox 552801
Lydia Carter 552720
Margaret Durrant 552608
Margaret Jones 552358
Maureen Lockyer 552492
Jean Mayne 552692
David Salmons 552721
Rita Taylor 552885
Carole Wyatt 552572

Sunday 4th December
Scouts Christmas Celebration,
2.30pm, St Mary's

Christmas Eve
St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
— 5pm Christingle
— 11.30pm Midnight Communion

Carols by Candlelight
Gussage St Andrew
— 6pm Friday 16th December
St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
— 6pm Sunday 18th December
St Rumbold's, Pentridge
— 6pm Monday 19th December

Christmas Day
Sixpenny Handley
— 9.30am Family Communion
St Rumbold's, Pentridge
— 11.15am Holy Communion



Come along and celebrate the Season with us

Thankyou!!

There are so many people we need to thank!

A very big seasonal THANK YOU to everyone who helps make our churches and communities what they are today – the wardens, service-leaders, PCC members, musicians, flower-arrangers, cleaners, readers, sides-persons, tea-makers, workers in churchyards... the list goes on and on. Thank you.



Angus and Mary Macleod (centre seated, with the choir behind) have been a vital part of St Mary's for a long time. They have now decided to step back, particularly from the music. Our thanks go to them for all their support – and also congratulations on their diamond-wedding anniversary.

Autumn Fayre raises over £1,500

Thanks must also go to everyone involved with the Autumn Fayre. £1,565.36p was raised over a very enjoyable afternoon. Look out for next year's extravaganza!



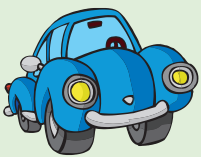
News items and articles welcome!
Please drop them in to the Vicarage, or email;
 rev.mel@handleychurch.org.uk
Thanks!

St Paul's

We welcome a team from St Paul's, Salisbury, on Sunday 4th December, who are going to lead the Informal service at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley.

Remembrance Day

Thanks to everyone who made the Remembrance Sunday service so powerful. We were able to send £457 to the British Legion.



Need a lift to Church?

Please ring Paul Skinner on 01725 552785 and we should be able to arrange transport.

Organ

Are you a budding organist? Contact the vicar and have a go on our lovely pipe organ at St Mary's.

Download from our website archive!



- The Seeker — in full colour!
- Minutes of PCC meetings
- Church forms and reports



Amazing truths and big fat lies are all part of our television diet. And that is just in the BBC One's comedy quiz *Would I Lie to You?*

The aim of this programme is to identify what is true and what is false. Each week, two teams of three celebrities reveal something extraordinary about themselves. Their opponents then have to decide if they are telling the truth or lying. It is a little like Call My Bluff on steroids. In one episode, David Mitchell talked about his teddy bear being cut open going through customs, comedian Kevin Bridges told how he once found a suspicious suitcase on a railway station that turned out to be filled with nothing but bananas, and Terry Wogan told how, in his early days on radio, he once set fire to a colleague's script while live on air.

Some of these were true and some were fanciful inventions. The search for truth was not straightforward.

And as we celebrate Christmas, with all its traditions and stories, we can struggle to find what is true, what is the real reason for the season. As in all truth, it's often a challenge.

Does eating too much and watching too much television in an overheated house with relatives you only see once a year make for a happy Christmas? Or is there more? It is for you to decide.

It can be difficult to work out the truth about the world – who's right and who's wrong, and whether there's anything more to life than getting through the day. And sometimes we go to great lengths to hide the truth from other people (and even ourselves) because we are afraid of rejection or it is just too painful to think about.

But truth, real truth can be life-changing. Jesus said, *'If you hold to my teaching you will know the truth and the truth will set you free'* (John 8:31-32). At Christmas we are offered a glimpse of real truth, if only we will see it.

And so when we see the baby at the heart of Christmas, when we accept Jesus as the centre of our lives, when we see God with us, we will see the world as it really is. Christmas will make sense. And we will be able to take comfort in the truth that we don't have to lie to people or ourselves. We need not be trapped by our failings, because (as Jesus shows us) it is not about us. Instead it is about God, who offers us forgiveness and love and himself.

And that is no lie.

Your friend and vicar, Mel

Christmas Chocolate

As we approach Christmas, please remember to check that your chocolate has the fairtrade logo (or similar).

If it doesn't, it may be made from cocoa that comes from plantations that are still using child labour – children who, to all intents and purposes, are slaves.

Go to www.stopthetraffic.org for more details. If your chocolate doesn't come from an ethical source, you may have "blood on your teeth" to quote Steve Chalke.

And remember to look out for other fairtrade goods as you go about your Christmas shopping.

Many charities do a brilliant range of Christmas gifts at this time of year and supermarkets have growing ranges of

ethically sourced goods. They deserve our support. How we spend our money says everything about what we think is important. How we spend our money says everything about *who* we think is important. Please be aware of where the things you buy come from, and who makes them. Let's make Christmas good news for *everyone!*

STOP THE TRAFFIK
 PEOPLE SHOULDN'T BE BOUGHT & SOLD



Christianity isn't a club for perfect people. It is a group open to all people who get it wrong, but are offered grace. Here are a few stories from people in the news.

Frank Skinner says he does not fit the typical Christian stereotype. 'I'm probably not what one expects a Christian to be,' he told the *Church Times*, 'but I'm very wary of what one expects a Christian to be, because that, certainly for non-Christians, is often quite a negative thing. It's often a lot of bad skin and acrylic fibre and people who don't have many friends, or whose way of life is using God as a kind of handrail to support them.'

Frank does not see Christianity as 'a consolation.' 'I don't want to believe in something because it makes me feel happy, or I might as well believe in Father Christmas,' he said.

'There's a thing I do,' he went on, 'when you read the Bible until just a phrase or word strikes you, or feels significant, and then you read it until you have memorised it. You think about what it means in the Bible, then what it means to you personally. Then you just sit in silence, and you just wait.'

Former *EastEnders* star and ex-drug addict **Danniella Westbrook** has become a Christian. *The Sunday Mirror* reported that Danniella and her husband Kevin have turned to God after moving to California and attending a church. The actress – whose nose was famously damaged by snorting cocaine – plans to dedicate her life to God and the Church.

Danniella says she has been clean from drugs for ten years. 'Gucci and Prada used to be my god,' she said. 'Now I have given my life to the Lord. I used to tell people: "I'm way past saving." After a few visits [to church] I found myself walking up to the altar to ask the Lord for forgiveness for my sins. It was an incredible experience.'

Pretty amazing grace is how you saved me,
And with amazing grace, reclaimed my heart.
Love in the midst of chaos,
Calm in the heat of war
Showed with amazing grace
What love was for.

From 'Pretty Amazing Grace' by **Neil Diamond**

Outnumbered star **Daniel Roche** told the *Radio Times* that filming scenes in the comedy series tested his Christian faith. 11-year-old Daniel, who plays Ben, found the scene where he questions a vicar challenging. In it Ben asks the vicar how Jesus would fight a polar bear and why Jesus couldn't come up with a better way of saving people than dying on a cross. 'Our vicar said something to Mum about it,' Daniel said, 'he went, "Loved that scene, but if he wants to know any of those things, you know he can come and talk to me".'

Cinema and television actor **David Oyelowo**, star of the new 'Rise of the Planet of the Apes' film, told *The Times* about his Christian faith. 'When I was 16 I struck a deal with God... if you're true, if you're real, turn up within three months or I'm out!' he said. 'Well. Much to my chagrin at the time, he did.' The actor also revealed that he had felt directed by God to play Martin Luther King in the forthcoming film, *Selma*.

Comedy actress and scriptwriter **Sally Phillips** told *Premier Christian Radio* how her faith affects her work. The star of the *Bridget Jones* films and *Miranda* said that she is willing to take on all kinds of roles reflecting various aspects of human nature and to write controversial material. She said, 'I don't think everyone should be doing neutral, family-friendly stuff. There is a role for the Christian as a kind of prophet. A comedian stands outside society and looks in and points out hypocrisy.'

Liza Goddard told the *Daily Mail* about her ex-husband **Alvin Stardust's** conversion. The paper reported that the singer came to faith on a 40-minute train journey. The actress said, 'he was converted by a group of people in his carriage. At Waterloo, the cleaner found them on their knees praying.'

Comedian **Milton Jones**, stand-up performer and *Mock the Week* regular, finds plenty to laugh about. 'Christianity is like a Cornish pasty. There's something in it, but sometimes it's difficult to find out what exactly.'

People are desperate to laugh in churches, he says. There is so much passive-aggressive behaviour, fear and tension. Also, Christians are battered by everyone else in society. That's all part of our faith, but sharing a joke together reminds us that we're part of a team.

'People think the concept of sin as being repressive and restrictive' he says. 'And it's true – you can drive a car a lot faster if you have no brakes.'

'We mess up,' he continues, 'but it's part of God's routine to offer us forgiveness and an indescribable hope. Salvation is like being returned to factory settings. But you have to admit there is a factory, and that there could be some settings.'

The number of students passing A Level Religious Studies has risen this year. More than 18,000 took the exam, with 80% of them getting grade C or above.

One of the most famous scientists of all time, Albert Einstein, said, "Nothing that I can do will change the structure of the universe. But maybe, by raising my voice I can help the greatest of all causes - goodwill among men and peace on earth."

St Mary's Churchyard

We hope you like the 'new' area at the bottom of St Mary's churchyard. We have now cleared it and are applying for change of use from agricultural land to burial ground. We shall then invite a bishop to consecrate the land. After that we will be moving the spoil heap from by the back gate, freeing up space for more burials while the new area is settling in. We hope to plant a hedgerow of local plants along the boundary with the sports field.

Our thanks go to Dave Swift and his team, and to all who are making this possible. We have found some letters telling us that this land was given to the church by the Pitt-Rivers estate in 1946 for use as an extension to the graveyard. That was good forward planning!



+ Bible Study

As we hope you see from *The Seeker*, the Bible is THE Book! Read it and understand more in good company on a Thursday evening once a month, 7.30pm. Phone Mike (552720) for details.

Midweek Holy Communion

Join us for a gentle service in St Mary's on the second Wednesday of the month at 11.30pm, followed by coffee.

Songs of Praise

Brighten up the gloomy days of January by coming along to our Winter Songs of Praise on Sunday 29th at 6pm.

Come and meet friends

*** Drop into the Post Office Coffee Shop** on the first Wednesday of the month from about 11 o'clock for a coffee and chat with the vicar.

◆ Fellowship Group – Meeting every Tuesday for chat, laughter and biscuits, some talk around serious themes and sometimes a steak supper or a Chinese takeaway! Phone Paul Skinner (552785).

☕ Men's Group – A beer and a chat usually on the last Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. Phone David Lockyer (552492) for details.

☘ Mothers' Union – Tea, company and a good talk, usually on the second Thursday afternoon of the month, from 2.45pm. Phone Sheila (553133) or Mary (552041) for details.

Join us for Christmas and the New Year

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary the Virgin Sixpenny Handley Informal service includes children's time			St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew	
	9.30am ☕	11.00am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am	
Dec 4 th	HC		Informal	Evensong	HC	#
Dec 11 th	MP		Informal	HC	#	HC
Dec 18 th	HC	(10.30am)	Informal	Carols	MP	#
Dec 25 th	HC		#	#	HC	#
Jan 1 st	HC		#	#	HC	#
Jan 8 th	MP		Informal	HC	#	HC
Jan 15 th	HC		Informal	Evensong	MP	#
Jan 22 nd	MP		Informal	HC	#	HC
Jan 29 th	HC		Inf & HC	S of P	MP	#

HC = Holy Communion | MP = Morning Prayer | SofP = Songs of Praise | # = No service



For unto us a child is born!

We wish you a joyful Christmas and we hope that you will join us at some of the events listed here.



Sun 4th	2.30pm	Scouts Christmas Celebration, St Mary's
Fri 16th	6.00pm	Carols at Gussage St Andrew
Sun 18th	6.00pm	Carols at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
Mon 19th	6.00pm	Carols at St Rumbold's, Pentridge
Tues 20th	6.00pm	Carols around Sixpenny Handley for Marie Curie
Thurs 22nd	5.30pm	Carols around Pentridge
Sat 24th	5.00pm	Christingle, St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
	11.30pm	Midnight Communion, St Mary's
Sun 25th	9.30pm	Family Communion, St Mary's



December 2011

See side panel for key to symbols

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6 ◆	7 *	8 ☘	9	10
11	12	13 ◆	14 HC	15 +	16	17
18	19	20 ◆	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Sat 3rd 1.00pm Wedding of Lee and Claire Watkinson, St Andrew's
Wed 7th 7.30pm St Mary's PCC meeting

January 2012

Updated weekly on our website

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3 ◆	4 *	5	6	7
8	9	10 ◆	11 HC	12 ☘	13	14
15	16	17 ◆	18	19 +☘	20	21
22	23	24 ◆	25	26 ☕	27	28
29	30	31				

Wed 11th 7.30pm St Mary's PCC meeting
Thurs 19th Mothers' Union Quiet Day