



The Seeker

www.handleychurch.org.uk



December

2014

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

Who's who?

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Lent Lunches with a Heart



You may remember we held a series of Lent Lunches last spring, which included information and fund-raising for a range of charities supported by people in our villages. Over £1,800 was raised altogether, including funds for building a fishing boat for a community devastated by the hurricane in the Philippines, building school houses in Kotchakindo, Uganda, and the team on their expedition to Malawi, that included building a doctor's surgery. All these are pictured above. We also helped replace a slum house in Chennai, India, and supported the Trussell Trust in Salisbury. Many thanks to everyone involved. We hope to run similar lunches again during Lent in 2015 – look out for details nearer the time.

This Year's Present

Do you still fancy giving someone the Goat? Or how about having a Hen Party? Or (Straw)berried Treasure, a Field of Dreams, Another Brick in the Wall, or some Health-Esteem? When you don't know what to give, give something else. Many charities give more than a gift, they give dignity, hope and freedom. Salvationarmy.org.uk and many other charities give a present that really means something to someone in need. You get a card to give to your loved one telling them what you have done. Someone you will never meet gets a better life.



You may have noticed 'Pramafair', a new fair-trade shop in Salisbury Street, Blandford. This is run by Pramacare, a Dorset-based Chris-

tian home-care charity. Following the closure of Set Fair4Trade, the previous fair-trade shop in Blandford, John Simmons, Rural Dean of Milton and Blandford and a Trustee for Prama, was quick to spot an opportunity. "I felt that the Prama ethos of looking beyond the provision of basic support for people living at home aligned well with the Fairtrade ethos." Prama's CEO, Jeff Russell, clearly agrees: "We are always seeking ways to improve the lives for many in our community and to raise awareness of those living with dementia, so to have the opportunity to generate income through fair trading is ideal."

Prama are known for the extra mile they go in order to deliver additional services, often free or subsidised, to their clients and the wider community. Jeff continues: "PramaFair sells high quality fair-trade gifts, cards, jewellery, clothing and more - including the ever-popular bamboo socks! Ideal for the Christmas shopper who will have the added pleasure of knowing they are supporting a Christian charity that is going the extra mile to help the local community. With more income we can provide more subsidised care for those on low incomes and increase the range of added activities to tackle loneliness and isolation experienced by older people across Dorset."



**News items
and articles welcome!**

**Please drop them in to
the Vicarage, or email;
ask@handleychurch.org.uk**

Thanks!

FROM THE REGISTERS



The baptisms took place of
**Daniel Darby, Hamish Sullivan
and Owen Brown.**

A Christmas Prayer...

*Lord, you know what it means
to be vulnerable*

*A fragile young life, a
defenceless young babe*

*So may my heart be
vulnerable and open*

*This Christmas with Christ,
walking closer each day.*

Amen.

www.easyfundraising.org

Shop online and raise funds for

Sixpenny Handley Church

Just visit easyfundraising.org
and search for our church and
follow the simple steps to sign
up. Each time you shop online
you'll earn us a donation, just
by making an extra click!

£300 raised so far!



We all know the other lyrics to some carols. We all know that 'While Shepherds watched their flocks by night' becomes 'While Shepherds washed their socks by night.' I didn't know until recently there are some other, equally good, misheard lyrics;

**Hark! the Herald Angels Sing,
Glory to the New York Kings.
Peace on earth and then he smiles;
God and sinners wrecked and styled.**

**Get Dressed Ye Married Gentlemen,
Let nothing through this May.**

Joy to the World, the Lord has Gum!

Deck the Halls with Buddy Holly!

And the saddest one, 'O Come,
Let Us Ignore Him...'

Too many people ignore the real Christmas. But it is so relevant. When Jesus was born the biggest issue of the day was wanting a different government and lower taxes. Does this sound familiar? And not much has changed elsewhere, either: The Wise Men came searching for Jesus, and every motel, hotel, Inn and B & B had a 'no vacancy' sign up. Everyone is just so busy at this time of year.

Indeed, 30% of all retail sales take place in the run up to Christmas. 50% of all parties are held around Christmas and the New Year. And one out of every ten gallons of alcohol is sold at this time of year. Clearly, Jesus is good for business. Now, there is absolutely nothing wrong with a good party, nothing wrong with having a good time, of course. The trouble is, we want a Santa and not a Saviour. We want the fairy tale and not the fact. We want a fight on EastEnders and a repeat of Morecombe and Wise rather than a reminder that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.

Now, we all love Morecombe and Wise (although a little bit of 'God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen' on EastEnders wouldn't go amiss!) but too often we get the holiday without the holy. We get Christmas without the Christ. We don't want to hear that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. There is a lot of it about. You might have heard

about the school Nativity Play where Mary and Joseph are painfully making their way to Bethlehem, while on the other side of the stage, a shepherd is on his mobile, texting ahead to make a reservation. Back in the Jerusalem, we read that King Herod tries to trick the Wise Men into telling him where Jesus had been born because he feels threatened and wants to kill him. Jesus still forces a reaction in the hearts of men and women who can't accept the truth and the authority he brings.

And why? Because when you do away with Jesus you can put yourself as God. Vladimir Lenin, the father of Russian communism, said of Jesus, 'His kingdom is invisible. His rule is in the hearts of men, so he can't be tolerated.' As a result over 20 million people died during the Russian Revolution in an attempt to build an atheistic state. But you know what? Fighting God is futile. It is a battle you can't win. King Herod went on to commit mass murder trying to wipe out Jesus. He failed, just as Lenin failed, centuries later.

Let's go back to the Wise Men. Would you be willing to leave the comfort of your home, travel several thousand miles (by camel) following a star to an unknown destination? They were. They hungered for God. And, deep down, we all have a hunger to experience something bigger than ourselves. It is why tribes who don't know Jesus make gods out of mountains, trees and rocks. It is why the ancient Greeks had an altar to 'The Unknown God'. It is why some people get so obsessed with the latest car, clothes, tablet or phone.

Jesus divides history into two parts, BC (Before Christ) and AD (After Christ - the Year of our Lord). History is His Story! And we can meet him and we can find in him in peace. Real peace. The God of such precision and forethought has a plan for your life, a plan for a life that only you can live. And it is the only plan that will satisfy and bring you real happiness.

The Good News of Christmas is that we can seek God and find him. Find him by coming to that stable, and finding that he is already with us. After all, anyone can go to a stable. And as you do, you step into your life, the life he has had waiting for you all along. Life everlasting. Life right now.

Your friend and vicar, Mel

SUPPORTING THE SUDAN

Sudan has dropped from the news lately, but the situation is grave and your support is urgently needed. The emergency caused by violent armed clashes in South Sudan continues. Over 1.7 million people have fled their homes. 1.3 million are displaced internally and 452,700 have fled to neighbouring countries. This in turn means that many farmers missed the planting season and will not have a crop this year.

The UN aid programme has struggled to respond to a worsening food situation, under-funded, impeded by the rainy season and poor roads, and subject to violence from both sets of combatants who resent aid being given to their opponents. The UN says at least four million people are facing starvation. There are also reports of children once again being forcibly conscripted as soldiers. This brutalisation of children has led to many of the country's young people being disaffected and violent. Aggression within displaced people's camps is a major concern.

As peace talks flounder, we give thanks for the Episcopal Church of Sudan and South Sudan, which is consistently calling for reconciliation and unity, and pointing out how badly their young country is being let down after so many died to win its independence. Salisbury diocese has raised £26,900 of its £50,000 target for the South Sudan Crisis Appeal.

Please follow the news on the Sudan Link pages of Salisbury Diocese website, and pray for peace in this troubled land. We can contribute to the crisis appeal. Details are on the Salisbury Diocese website. If you especially want to help work with children, many of whom have been separated from their parents, you may like to consider buying cards and gifts from Unicef this Christmas.

A Prayer for South Sudan

*From burning villages and butchered lives
Good Lord, deliver South Sudan.*

*From the misery of flooded refugee
camps and the agony of famine
Good Lord, deliver South Sudan.*

*From the brutality of men of war,
and the death of her newborn
Good Lord, deliver South Sudan.*

*For all the prayers for peace, in South Sudan
and across the world,
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Eat the Christmas Story

The Real Advent Calendar is a great way to share the real meaning of Christmas. There's a line of the Christmas story and a chocolate star behind each window. Behind the final window is a 24-page Christmas story-book. A donation is made to The Funzi and Bod Trust and the chocolate is Fairtrade. It costs £3.99 Details of where to buy at: www.realadvent.co.uk/shop (And please remember to buy chocolate with the Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance logos!)

HOPE ON THE BATTLEFIELD

The modern day soldier faces a very different battlefield to that of a hundred years ago, but the message remains the same. Gary Birch is padre to the 6th Battalion The Rifles, an army reserve unit. In May this year he used a reprint of Gospels given to soldiers in World War One to minister to soldiers and officers on exercise in Cyprus now. 'I led a field service and spoke about having hope in a hope-less world,' said Gary. 'I was able to talk about the booklets and the hope they gave to WW1 soldiers.'

Gary's message touched on the words of Field Marshall Lord Roberts inside the little books to encourage the soldiers to seek God. The words say: 'I ask you to put your trust in God. He will watch over you and strengthen you. You will find in this little book, guidance when you are in health, comfort when you are in sickness, and strength when you are in adversity.'

'Immediately after the service, the majority of them came and took a copy of the replica gospel,' said Gary. 'And a handful of them spoke to me about what I'd said and how thought-provoking it was.'

Over forty three million copies were printed originally. This year over half a million copies of the World War One anniversary Gospel have been printed and given away. I hope you were given yours at the Remembrance Day service and have been touched by its message of hope. If you haven't read it yet – why not just read the first page or two as an introduction and see how you get on?

Light for the World

A piece of string cannot stand up straight.

It lies in a curl where it falls.

A piece of string, if you try to light it, will smoulder and give off smoke and smell.

A piece of string, dipped and dipped again in melted wax, will absorb the wax and become surrounded by its firm set encasing. The more often it's dipped the more substantial it becomes, until it can stand, unaided, upright, firm. No longer string but candle.

That candle now lit will burn, giving off a clear light that pierces darkness; giving off a warmth and a reassuring glow in the dark.

The string is essential for the wax to release its heat and light.

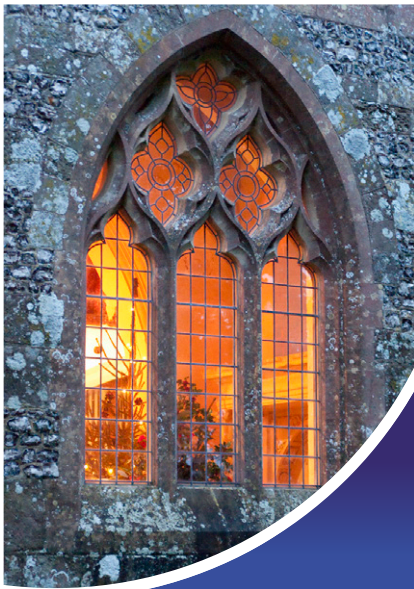
The string will be consumed as the heat and light is released.

All around me there are people whose lives are cold. I know people who travel through the shadow of dark times. On my own I have no warmth or light to offer.

Yet when I allow myself to be immersed over and over again in the Holy Spirit of God, I am infused and surrounded by a power, and I will be available to be consumed as that power burns through me, and warms and brings light to those around.

The more often I am immersed in the source of that great power, the stronger I will stand and the brighter I will burn, until I am all consumed and am fully absorbed into the very source of the power itself. To shine with God for ever.





+ Bible Study Group

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, 7.15pm. Phone Mike on 01725 552 720 for details.

Come and meet friends

* **Drop into...** the Post Office Coffee Shop on the first Wednesday from about 11 o'clock, or The Walnut Tree on the last Wednesday, for a coffee and chat with the vicar or curate.

T Teddy Bears

Pre-school children and their carers are invited to St Mary's on Thursday mornings during school term from 10.30am to noon, for fun, drinks and biscuits and maybe a Bible story or two. There is no charge.

◆ Fellowship Group

The Fellowship Group (usually) meet every Tuesday for chat, laughter and biscuits, some talk around serious themes and sometimes a Roebuck steak! Phone Paul Skinner (552 785).

☪ **Men's Group** – A beer and a chat usually on the last Thursday of the month. Details from David Lockyer (552 492).

☪ **Mothers' Union** – Tea, company and a good talk, usually on the second Thursday afternoon of the month, from 2.45pm. Phone Sheila (553 133) or Mary (552 041) for details.

Celebrate Christmas and New Year with us!

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary's 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 7 th	HC	(10.30am)	Informal	Evensong	HC	#
Dec 14 th	MP		Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Dec 21 st	HC		Informal	Carols	MP	#
Dec 28 th	HC		#	#	#	#
Jan 4 th	HC		Informal	Evensong	HC	#
Jan 11 th	MP	Informal	Evensong	#	HC	
Jan 18 th	HC	Informal	Evensong	MP	#	
Jan 25 th	MP	Inf HC	Evensong	#	HC	

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

Celebrate the Reason for the Season — with friends...

Wed 3rd Dec 7.00pm WI Carols at St Mary's
 Sun 7th Dec 2.30pm Scouts Christmas Celebration, St Mary's
 Tue 9th Dec 2.30pm Mothers' Union Advent service, St Mary's
 Wed 18th Dec 10.30am School Praise Assembly, St Mary's



Carols by Candlelight

Fri 19th Dec 6.00pm at Gussage St Andrew
 Sun 21st Dec 6.00pm at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
 Mon 22nd Dec 6.00pm St Rumbold's, Pentridge



Christmas

Wed 24th Dec 4.00pm Christingle, St Mary's
 11.30pm Midnight Communion, St Mary's
 Thu 25th Dec 9.30am Family Communion, St Mary's
 11.15am Holy Communion, St Rumbold's, Pentridge



December

See side panel for key to symbols

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

January 2015

Updated weekly on our website

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

Thu 8th 2.45pm Mothers' Union AGM, and more!