



The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



Dec 2016

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 552 608
ask@handleychurch.org.uk

Curates

Rev Paul Skinner
01725 552 785
Rev Dr Michael Foster
01258 830 764

Churchwardens

St Mary's with
Gussage St Andrew

Roy Warner 552 787

St Rumbold's, Pentridge

Mary Ferguson 552 222
Jane King 552 231

Licenced Lay Minister

John Cullingford 516 453

Lay Pastorial Assistants

Lydia Carter 552 720
Margaret Durrant 552 608
Margaret Jones 552 358
Maureen Lockyer 552 492
Jean Mayne 552 692
David Salmons 552 721

(Area code 01725)

A Christmas Story

Johnny went to stay with his Aunt and grandmother for Christmas. His Gran loved having him, but she was getting old and his aunt thought it a pity that he had come at this time of year, as Gran had not been too well lately.

Most of the time the Aunt could be around and make sure he stayed quiet, or she took him out doing things. But one afternoon she had to go to a meeting and couldn't take Johnny, and she was anxious about leaving him alone with Gran, even though the old lady assured her they would be alright and she would like to have Johnny to herself for a little while.

Just before the Aunt went out, she took Johnny to one side and said, 'you will be a good boy, won't you? You won't disturb Gran? You mustn't make a noise. You can sit over there and read that nice book. Don't pull on the curtains and don't touch the ornaments.' She drew a breath and, looking round the room, her eyes fell on a text Gran had embroidered and framed many years before, and now hung over the mantelpiece. 'There', she said, pointing her finger, 'Can you read that?'

Johnny carefully read '*Thou, God, seest me.*'

'Yes', said his aunt. 'Just you remember that. Whatever you do, *God will see you* – so be a good boy.' And on that triumphant note she went out. Johnny looked around the room, hardly daring to move, and cast a wary eye on his Gran. She was smiling and shaking her head with a laugh.



'You know, Johnny,' she said, 'She's got it all wrong. It doesn't mean what she said at all. It means, *God loves you so much that he simply can't take his eyes off you!*'

The Christmas story is just the place to start such a journey of revelation, of transformation and love, because it represents the everyday aspect of God's love. The divine and the ordinary go hand in hand in a stable, because *God can't take His eyes off you*. Love wins in the end. And this is what Christmas is really all about. **Mel**

Eat the Christmas Story!



A great way to share the real meaning of Christmas. There's a line of the Christmas story and a chocolate behind each window. There is also a Christmas story and activity book. You can also buy the 12 Days of Christmas Truffles and angel tree decorations. Donations are made to The Leprosy Mission, Christians Against

Poverty, Baby Lifeline and other charities – and the chocolate is Fairtrade. It is available from a range of shops. Full details at www.realadvent.co.uk/shop

And please remember to make sure all the chocolate you buy comes with the Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance logos!





News items and articles welcome!

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

Thanks!

FROM THE REGISTERS



The Wedding took place of

Olivia and Ben Broad
Glen and Vicky Arnold
Leon and Fiona Walton

The funerals took place of

Dave Weeks, Derry Goddard,
Peter Godden, Phyllis Chown,
Judith Gillespie-Smith and
Kevin Appleby

Are you sitting comfortably?

At St Mary's we are looking at ways of making the church more comfortable. This includes improving the heating. If you would like to help us (perhaps by paying for a pew to be heated) please talk to the vicar or churchwarden.

In full colour

A full colour PDF of The Seeker is available from our website.



Dear friends...

You may have seen shock horror headlines that nearly 40% of the population don't believe Jesus was a real person. However, when you look at the details the actual figures are a bit more subtle (as usual).

The survey, conducted for a group of churches including the Church of England, found that 22% of people think Jesus was a mythical figure while 17% are unsure whether he was real or not. Together, that makes 39% of people who actively don't believe or are unsure about Jesus. Not quite as bad as it first sounds. And, bizarrely enough (although encouragingly), some 43% (a higher percentage) of adults believe in the Resurrection, the Easter Story. If these figures are accurate, it shows a massive polarisation about belief in Jesus in the UK. But the Christian story is either true or it is not. And even secular historians will tell you that Jesus really existed.

However, the precise details may not quite be the same as the school nativity play you remember. For a start, the real Christmas story was spread over a much longer time – the Wise Men, whose gifts are why we give Christmas presents, probably came several years later than everyone else. And the stable was almost certainly a cave. But these details don't really make much difference.

Except, think on. You can't have Christmas without Easter, and what started in a cave ended in a cave. A man called Joseph gave his cave for the burial of Jesus on the first Good Friday. He gave up a precious possession as a gift. And so (in a way) he was no different from the unnamed person who gave Mary and the other Joseph the cave, for the birth of their baby.

This first cave was a gift to a powerless child and a family in need. The second was a gift to a dead, penniless man. Neither gift could be paid for, but they were freely and lovingly given. They weren't even asked for, but they were needed. Jesus needed them because he was fully human, and being human means to be in need.

We all need someone to help us, in at least two crucial and powerless points in life, our birth and our death. We can never give back these gifts. At these moments we rely on the generosity of others. So did Jesus.

The Wise Men brought three famous gifts, of course: Gold, incense and myrrh. Years later, women brought similar gifts to the tomb. In the early Easter morning they wanted to anoint his body before it started to decay. But these gifts turned out not to be needed or used. Jesus body was not there.

The two sets of gifts are similar but the two groups of people, separated by time, are very different. The Wise Men were learned leaders and rulers: The women were at the lowest end of their societies, marginalised and uneducated: The humble innkeeper and the wealthy tomb-owner. What connects them is that each was generous and their gifts came from their hearts. They responded to the love of God, choosing to be generous in return.

So our challenge, this Christmas, this New Year, and always, is to be generous ourselves – to be a gift to someone, maybe a neighbour, or someone we don't know and who will never be able to pay us back. We may be generous with our time and our talent, our money, or just with ourselves.

Christmas is about being a little bit like God, being generous and available. After all, as I've said before, anyone can go to a stable.

Your friend and Vicar, Mel

This Year's Present

When you don't know what to give, give something else. Many charities give more than a gift, they give dignity, hope and freedom. You can buy ethical gifts from The Salvation Army, Christian Aid and many other charities. You get a card to give to your loved one telling them what you have done, and someone you will never meet gets a better life.





Mary and Joseph Posada

At the beginning of Advent we send Mary and Joseph off on their journey around our villages as they begin their journey to Bethlehem. This is a tradition from Mexico called Posada, which means Inn. Come along on to St Mary's on Sunday 27th November and Pentridge on December 4th to see them off – and make sure they come to your house on the way!

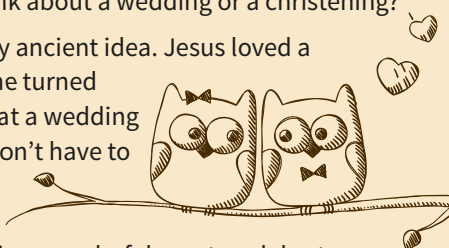
Looking Ahead

This is the time of year when we start planning ahead – so why not think about a wedding or a christening?

Marriage is a very ancient idea. Jesus loved a good wedding; he turned water into wine at a wedding reception! You don't have to be christened to get married

in church and it is a wonderful way to celebrate one of the biggest days of your life.

And we can thank God for the gift of life, and give that life the best start possible in a christening. For your child, christening marks the start of a journey of faith. Teenagers and adults can also be christened – or you may like to think about Confirmation, confirming the promises made on your behalf. Like God's love, christening is free and a marriage needn't cost the earth. Talk to the vicar today.



The easiest way to support your church

Do you shop online? Every time you buy you could also be raising money for Sixpenny Handley Church. Over 2,700 retailers, including Amazon, John Lewis, eBay and Tesco will donate a percentage of what you spend to say thank you for shopping with them. It's a really simple process; all you have to do is register at easyfundraising.org.uk. When you're asked to choose your cause, select **Sixpenny Handley Church**.

Easyfundraising has already raised over £5 million for over 50,000 good causes across the UK. Spread the word to family and friends this Christmas to let them know just how easy it is!

Quiet Time

You may like to use these prayers in your own time. Perhaps you can set aside a few minutes on Monday evenings at 9 o'clock, using these prayers as well as your own, or just be quiet in the presence of God, knowing that you are sharing the time with others in our area. Remember that St Mary's and St Rumbold's are open every day for prayer and reflection.

A Prayer for Christmas

We thought we knew where to find you;
We hardly needed a star to guide the way,
Just perseverance and common sense;
Why do you hide yourself away from the powerful
And join the refugees and outcasts,
Calling us to follow you there?
Wise God, give us wisdom.

We thought we had laid you safe in the manger;
We wrapped you in the thickest sentiment we could find,
And stressed how long ago you came to us;
Why do you break upon us in our daily life
With messages of peace and goodwill,
Demanding that we do something about it?
Just and righteous God, give us justice and righteousness.

So where else would we expect to find you
But in the ordinary place with the faithful people,
Turning the world to your purpose through them?
Bring us to that manger, to that true rejoicing,
Which will make wisdom, justice and righteousness
alive in us.

Stephen Orchard

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.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds,
the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of
Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ child, be
ours this Christmas. Amen.

A Prayer for the New Year

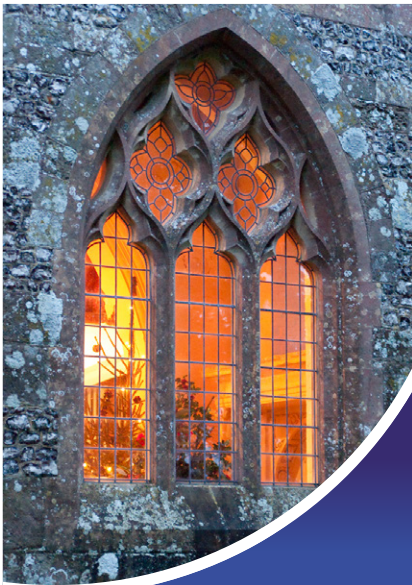
Lord, at the beginning of this year I offer you my life.

Come, take my voice: may the words I speak be filled
with encouragement and goodness.

Come, take my hands: may the work they create be
generous and giving.

Come, take my feet: may the journeys I walk be led by
your Spirit.

Come, take my life: for I love your goodness, your
kindness and your leading. Amen.



+ 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 alternate Thursdays at 7.15pm. Details from Mike on 01725 552 720.

Come and meet friends

*** Drop into...** the Post Office Coffee Shop on the first Monday of the month 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.

L Church Lunch

Join us at Hanlega's, at the campsite, on the first Sunday of the month at 1pm for Sunday lunch – Everyone is welcome.

☕ Men's Group – A beer and a chat to finish off the month at 7.30pm. Details from David Lockyer (552 492).

☘ Mothers' Union – Tea, company and a good talk, usually every second Thursday of the month, from 2.30pm. Details from Mary (552 041).

Join us for Christmas and the New Year

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 4 th	HC	10.30am	Informal	Evensong	HC	#
Dec 11 th	MP		Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Dec 18 th	HC		Informal	Carols	MP	#
Dec 25 th	HC		#	#	HC	#
Jan 1 st	HC		#	#	HC	#
Jan 8 th	Look out for details of our 2017 service pattern*				HC	#
Jan 15 th					#	HC
Jan 22 nd					MP	#
Jan 29 th					#	HC

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

*At the time of writing we are still discussing how we can serve our communities in the best way possible – look out for details on the notice boards, notice sheets and website.

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

Tue 13th Dec 1.30pm Preschool Nativity, St Mary's
Wed 14th Dec 10.30am School Praise Assembly, St Mary's

Carols by Candlelight

Fri 16th Dec 6.00pm at Gussage St Andrew
Sun 18th Dec 6.00pm at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
Mon 19th Dec 6.00pm St Rumbold's, Pentridge



Christmas

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



December 2016

See side panel for key to symbols

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

January 2017

Updated weekly on our website

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