



The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



Dec 2017

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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Also available in colour

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

Come to Church *this* weekend

Here are twelve reasons I am inviting you to church this weekend;

1. Your family want you to come.
2. Gathering together is part of what it means to be a Christian.
3. You'll be prayed for and will be able to pray for others.
4. It's good to have your views and opinions challenged sometimes.
5. It will help you acknowledge and confess (and maybe even sort out) something wrong in your life.
6. It's a break from work.
7. It's where your real friends are.
8. It will help you put your life story into the great scheme of things.
9. It will remind you that you have nothing to fear.
10. Because gathering strengthens your faith.
11. It will give you support in times of need.
12. It will help you be a better member of your local community.

Why come to church this weekend? You'd be crazy not to, especially with all these reasons. Perhaps you can think of some more – we will have another dozen next month.

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.

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 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.

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 of Oliver and Crissi Kirby Terry and Becki Davies

The funerals took place of Chris Wadge, Brian Davies and Roy Warner



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*, a word which means *Inn*. Come along on to St Mary's or St Rumbold's on Sunday 3rd December to see them off – and make sure they come to your house on the way!

The Golden Thread

A meditation for Christmas

The baby held in his tiny fist a golden strand of brittle hay, on which the lamplight gleamed. The mother bent over the wooded trough and smiled at the newborn. The baby loosed the corn from his fist, took her finger, and gazed into her eyes.

Later, in a home the family would flee, the toddler played on the wooden floor with a golden box, enjoying the rattle of coins within, a gift from a stranger, along with incense and anointing oil, whose presence made his mother's heart run cold.

Day by day, the boy grew up, with only occasional flashes of golden light to illuminate the normality of an ordinary life. And then the carpenter's son, beside the Jordan, as golden water splashes up, reflecting sunlight looked into the face of his cousin; they smiled and knew that everything had changed.

In the wilderness, he shared with the bees a sticky golden treasury of honey, and from the golden temple roof, the golden crust of new-baked bread, and gold crowns of the world's kingdoms, he scorned temptation. The desert light brought clarity to a story threaded through history and prophecy, leading to a road which only lead to pain.

From fast to feast, the lamplight of the Upper Room shone to illuminate another loaf of bread and cup of golden wine, shared by friends and betrayer who held in his pocket a fistful of coins. But nonetheless, a golden moment, in which eternity must hold a new creation in taut harmony with earthly time and space.

The golden cockerel crowed a third time, and by the light of a brazier, perhaps the worst betrayal of all played out.

Another dawn will bring the cross, a day within which colour leached away to grey until the moment when son and mother met in unbearable agony. No gold, no thread, a great unravelling.

A fracture in eternity at the moment of incarnation shines golden through the wounds of torture, cross and grave, revealed in resurrection light of day, recognised in a flowered garden. From scars, shine out the light of a new day.

God is woven into the weft of history, the golden thread appearing in our past and on into our futures.

A golden hope, a bright sadness, is woven through your life. Recognise for yourself the illuminated path, the golden strands of God that weave you into the very heartbeat of God.

Amen.

Psalm

O Lord you have set before me a tapestry of such beauty. You have woven the blue sky with clouds of white and sown a wind so I can hear its wild music.

You have given us senses to complete our joy. Eyes to see – ears to hear and our lips to sing your praises. So I thank you dear Father God for the beauty of these gifts.

You have sewn scenes of wonder on both land and sea. Now, as I watch the swallows gather on the wires ready for flight I thank you for the delight this gives me – For I can hear their small tweets of joy. As the wind lifts them to freedom – who knows where.

You have stitched the seals resting on the black, black rocks. And my heart now fills again with joy. To hear their wild singing on the evening air.

You have changed your tapestry through differing lights – The golden sun that stirs our souls with peace and our bodies with warmth. The silver threaded moon that calms our moods with its beauty – magical and clean. And you have sewn the dark, heavy clouds that bring rain to replenish the earth in growth.

You have stitched Summer with its myriad of wild flowers in fields and hedgerows, and woven our gardens with ablaze with colour. You have sewn for us gifts of food. An abundance of vegetables and fruit from an earth nourished by the falling rain.

Your needles have worked to paint the Church as it nestles proudly In the hillside village. The air across the valley rings with the sound of its bells – Whilst moor sheep – sewn all around lift their heads at the sweetness of the sounds.

Your tapestry has been put before me always. I have walked within its beauty forever and have woven my days to its magic with, love. So thank you dear Father God for the joy and peace it has always afforded me.

Margaret Quinn

Thinking of a christening or a wedding next year?

Time to start planning ahead – speak to the vicar today.



Dear friends...

Your friend and vicar, Mel

It will soon be time to decorate the Christmas Tree. Did you know that the decoration at the very top was originally a figure of the baby Jesus? In Victorian Britain this changed to an angel. Children would take the angel down after Christmas and dress him in doll's clothes. Not surprisingly, the clothes become more and more elaborate and the angel, well, become a girl.

And as Christmas pantomimes become popular, and featured good and bad fairies, the figure on the tree was given a magic wand, and the transformation into a fairy was complete. There were still angels hanging on the branches of the tree, though (along with the glass baubles and tinsel) to remind us of the angels who told the shepherds of the birth of the baby Jesus.

You may have a star on the top of your tree. The star (of course) represents the star that guided the Wise Men to visit Jesus, bringing with them presents of gold, incense and myrrh, which is where our tradition of giving presents at Christmas comes from. In fact, stars have knocked fairies off the top of Christmas trees for some years now. Apparently, some shops have stopped selling angel tree-toppers, as I read the other day that stars now outsell angels by ten to one! Whatever you have on the top of your tree, I hope you enjoy it and remember that Christmas is the biggest birthday party of the year! Happy Birthday Jesus!

You might have heard one of the names often given to Jesus, particularly at this time of the year. He is called Immanuel – which means *God with us*. It is a Hebrew title – you can tell that any name in the Bible with 'el' somewhere in it, is probably something to do with God. Immanuel. And Hebrew works backwards, they think the other way round to English, so *Imm anu El* is literally, 'Us with God' – but they mean it the other way round – *God with us*.

The more you think about it, the more amazing this

name becomes. When God gave us this *baby*, he was giving us himself. Mary's son was not Joseph's son (that's why he nearly divorced her). He was God's Son. Which means he was God. God living in this world. God walking on the pages of history. God with us!

And not only did God's Son come as a person, he came as a baby - completely vulnerable, completely dependent. The hands that crafted the stars at the beginning of everything now reach up for a cuddle. The one who sustains the cosmos needs to be cleaned and changed. This is how God comes to us – how he reveals himself. And we call it Christmas.

I heard the other day of a young man who had just started working, and he used his salary and all his savings to fly to Australia for the weekend. By the time he had checked in, flown, gone through security and customs, he only had five hours before he needed to check in again for his return flight. Why did he make the journey? To see his girlfriend. And what did all that effort say to the girl? *I love you*. I care about you. He could have sent a letter, (he *did* send letters) but it would not have said so much. Instead he gave himself. That said it all.

God gave us far more, and travelled far further – from the throne of heaven to a stable in the Middle East. And that journey went on to the cross and beyond. Why did he make the journey? Because he loves us. And the fact that God turns up, in such an amazing way, shows that God really loves you and me! Which means that nothing anyone else says or does can destroy that love: The love of God.

Each one of us is totally precious, however we may be feeling or however we may be treated by other people. Nobody is nobody to God. And if God loves us that much and comes to us that completely, that means that everything will be alright – in the end, everything will be alright.

We also celebrate with Twelve Days of Christmas. (We might not actually do the Twelve Days of Christmas – but we sing about them!) I came across this explanation of the famous song recently – Apparently it is Christian code, from a time when celebrations were frowned upon. And it goes like this;

<i>Twelve Drummers drumming</i>	—	the twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed
<i>Eleven Pipers piping</i>	—	the eleven faithful disciples
<i>Ten Lords a Leaping</i>	—	the Ten Commandments
<i>Nine Ladies dancing</i>	—	the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit
<i>Eight maids a-milking</i>	—	the eight Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount
<i>Seven Swans a-swimming</i>	—	the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit
<i>Six geese a-laying</i>	—	the six days in the story of Creation
<i>Five Gold Rings</i>	—	the five Books of the Law, the first five books in the Old Testament
<i>Four Calling Birds</i>	—	the Four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
<i>Three French Hens</i>	—	Faith, hope and love (and the greatest of these is love)
<i>Two Turtle Doves</i>	—	the Old and New Testaments
<i>And a Partridge in a Pear Tree</i>	—	Jesus Christ Himself



You may need to look up some of the references to fully understand what is going on, but the main thing is that it is about a birthday, and birthday presents - and the presence of Jesus Himself – Immanuel, now and 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 alternate Thursdays at 7.15pm.

Details from Mike on 01725 552 720.

Come and meet friends

L Church Lunch

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

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.

☪ 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).

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary's Sixpenny Handley		St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew
	9.30am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am
Dec 3 rd	HC	Evensong	HC	#
Dec 10 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Dec 17 th	HC	Evensong	MP	#
Dec 24 th	HC	See below	#	#
Dec 31 st	Family HC	#	#	#
Jan 7 th	HC	Evensong	HC	#
Jan 14 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Jan 21 st	HC	Evensong	MP	#
Jan 28 th	Informal	HC	#	MP

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

Our Informal service is geared more towards families and includes activities for children.

This year – get to the bottom of the story and not just the tree...

Tue 5th Dec 1.15pm Preschool Nativity, St Mary's
 Sun 10th Dec 3.00pm Scout Christmas Celebration, St Mary's

Carols by Candlelight

Fri 15th Dec 6.00pm at Gussage St Andrew
 Sun 17th Dec 6.00pm at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
 Mon 18th Dec 6.00pm St Rumbold's, Pentridge

Christmas

Sun 24th Dec 4.00pm Christingle, St Mary's
 11.30pm Midnight Communion, St Mary's
 Mon 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
31					1	2
3 L	4	5	6	7 T +	8	9
10	11	12	13 HC	14 T ☪	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Thur 14th 2:30pm Mothers' Union – Christmas meeting

January 2018

See website for updates

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 T	26	27
28	29	30 ☪	31			

Thur 11th 2:30pm Mothers' Union, AGM – and more!