



The Seeker

December

2008

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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Margaret Durrant 552608
Maureen Lockyer 552492
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A full colour version
of *The Seeker*
can be downloaded
from our website!

The Vicar Writes



Dear Friends

A five year-old little girl was watching as the nativity scene was set up for the carol service. She was mesmerised by all the figures, and especially by the baby Jesus. When she asked what the manger was, her teacher explained it was a feeding trough and that Mary and Joseph didn't have a crib or a cot, so they had to put a blanket on the hay in the trough and lay the baby Jesus there.

The little girl thought for a moment and then asked, 'Did they have to use a manger for his car seat, too?'

We might not always get all the details right, but Christmas is a very special time. We remember a baby in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another village where he worked in his step-father's woodwork shop until he was thirty. Then for three years he walked around the area as an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held office. He never had a family or owned a house. He never travelled more than 200 miles from the place he grew up. He did none of the things we usually associate with greatness. He had no credentials except himself.

He was only thirty-three when the tide of public opinion turned against him. His friends ran away and he was executed by being nailed to a cross between two thieves. While he was dying his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth.

Two thousand years have come and gone and today this man is still the central figure of the human race. All the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever sailed, all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ruled or presidents that were elected, all put together, have not affected our lives on this earth as much as that one solitary life.

The baby, born in a dirty stable, changed everything for ever. He is sometimes called 'The Light of the World', (you may know the famous painting of that name) which seems particularly appropriate at this time of year as we light candles and think of that great star and those shining angels.

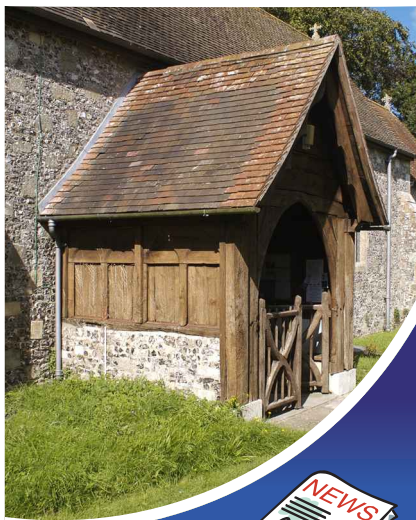
We all experience dark times in our lives. We all go through bad experiences. But it only takes one little light to push the darkness away. It might still be gloomy, but it is no longer dark. And we also know that, two thousand years ago, God punched a hole in the darkness so that the light would shine through for all time and we need never walk in darkness again. This is what we celebrate at Christmas. This is the Good News.

And as part of that Good News we give and receive presents. In this edition of *The Seeker* we are thinking about gifts and talents, and I hope that you enjoy the season. The whole of Christmas, indeed the whole of history, is incomprehensible without Jesus. And remember, at Christmas time we often receive presents we don't really need. God offers us a gift we cannot do without.

Your Friend and Vicar, Mel

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Any Pentridge and Woodyates news for The Seeker to Maureen Swan on 01725 552561

Any other news to the Vicarage, please.

FROM THE REGISTERS



Dylan and Finn Easton were baptised on 28th September

Dylan and Charlie Oxford were baptised in St Mary's on 12th October

Eileen Miles was buried at St Mary's on 19th September

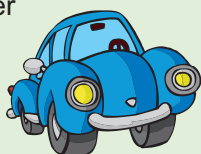
Alexandra Sherman's memorial service took place at St Mary's on 22nd September

Sheila Smith's Celebration of Life took place at St Mary's on 2nd October

Elsie Smith's funeral took place at Salisbury Crematorium on 30th October

Bob Grundy's funeral took place at St Rumbold's on 4th November

Need a lift to Church?



Ring Paul on 01725 552785

PENTRIDGE and WOODYATES NEWS



Remembrance Sunday — the Service of Remembrance, on a very wild & windy 9th November, was led by Bill Chorley. In his address Bill gave a very thought-provoking insight into the lives of some of the servicemen. The collection was sent to The Royal British Legion.

A Pentridge Christmas — On Saturday 20th December there will be a Christmas Carol Party from 5.30pm – 7.30pm in The Barn, Manor Farm House, East Woodyates. There will be carol singing, festive food & mulled wine – see Downsman for larger advert. The Carol Service will be held in St Rumbold's on Monday 22nd December at 6pm and there will be a service on Christmas Day at 11.15am.

The **Bring & Buy Sale** on 25th October raised much needed funds. Many thanks to all those who supported the event by helping at the sale, contributing items and/or coming along to buy something on the day – all much appreciated.



Alpha

Alpha is coming — Again! The present Alpha course is finishing, but we are hoping to run it again in the New Year – do talk to those who have been on it this time and look out for details of the next. This is an exciting chance to find out more about all those things you always wondered about – Did Jesus actually exist? Why did he die? How do we have faith? Does evil exist? What about the Holy Spirit? We explore these subjects after a great meal in comfortable surroundings among friends. Look out and come along!

Christmas is coming...

In addition to our usual services, remember to make a note of our special services over Christmas as we remember the best story ever – the story of Jesus being born to bring us the Light of the World.

Full details, dates and times are listed on the back page. Besides the Carol Services, Midnight Communion and Christmas Day services, our famous Christingle service is on Christmas Eve at 5.00pm in Sixpenny Handley, where all the children will be given a very special candle to take home. Why not join us for the real Christmas this Christmas time?



At Harvest we launched our most bizarre fund-raising scheme yet. We gave away money! We gave away envelopes containing crisp £10 notes. And we still have some more to give away! This is a starter kit as part of our Talent Challenge. The challenge is to use this money to generate more money before Easter 2009, when we ask for the £10 back and your profit to go towards the planned improvements (see *We've got talent* right).

The money being given away has been lent by members of the church. You might think about using it to grow and sell plants, take in ironing, sell cakes, hold a Scrabble evening, show your holiday pictures over a meal, sell things on ebay, hold a clothes swap, tutor music or maths, sell real lemonade, walk dogs. The list is endless – part of the Talent Challenge is to be creative. (We spent our £10 on stamps and sent an appeal letter to all our friends and family. Replies are starting to come in, and we are already into profit!) Do some maths: If 100 people each make a further £10, we would generate £1,000. If 100 people make an additional £100 then we raise £10,000. There is space to advertise on the church notice sheet and we can print flyers for you. Your £10 can be obtained from the Vicarage (552608) or 46 High Street (553133) or 8 Sycamore Close (552455). Be creative and change the world.



We are now over half way to raising the funds we need, and the planned improvements at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley are going on apace. Plans will soon be appearing in the church and we hope to get a lot of the work done next year. Please come up and have a look. Many people have already been very helpful and put in

a lot of work on this project and the experts from the diocese have been uniformly supportive and encouraging. I would particularly like to thank Sheila Bradley, Margaret Durrant and Gillian Wadge for all their work, and there are many others who are giving generously of their time.

The bells and the clock need important maintenance, and we would like to move the font forward into the body of the church where it can be seen more and be easier to use. Around this we would like to create a better space for coffee and other social events at the back of the church and put a toilet in a (soundproofed!) cabin in the base of the tower. We are also

looking at improving the heating and the sound and vision systems, and improving the kitchen facilities. The path outside needs attention, and the final job would be a general redecoration. We believe that the church and the community as a whole will benefit greatly from the improvements and the building will actually look like less has been done to it than before as the proposals are in keeping with our heritage, while bringing our beautiful building up to date.

If you would like to give to the 50K Challenge to help us serve our community better, please see the 50K Talent article or contact the Vicarage.

WE'VE GOT TALENT! Mel Durrant

The Parable of the Talents, Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 25. The story Jesus tells about the people given talents and then told to go away and use them to their best ability is one of those stories... SO famous! I first heard it when I was very little, but one thing that puzzled me is the amount of talents that are given away. The servants are given five, two and one talent apiece. Different amounts - and yet not one of them says that it is unfair.

I thought it sounded very unfair. I may only have had one brother, and no servants, but we knew exactly how to share things fairly. When there was cake or pudding left over, we followed the 'one cuts the other chooses' way of sharing. Everything was divided up, equally, to the nearest molecule. I can still divide any shape exactly in half to this day - it's a very useful skill!

So in this story, when the three people are given such obviously different amounts, I felt for the one given less. And I also didn't like the reaction of the King when he becomes so angry on his return and found that the man had buried his one talent rather than risk using it to generate more. There is something very unfair going on here, I thought.

But then, I have learnt since that life is very unfair. Let me explain... The problem lies with the word 'talent'. This skews the way we read the story, because immediately we think of our talent in

playing the piano, or singing, or gardening, or whatever talent we may have. Jesus is not talking about these sorts of talents. 'Talent,' in this story, is an ingot of gold or silver or copper. The most common was made of silver and in today's money would sell for over £2,000.

That sounds quite a lot already - we could do with quite a few talents like that in our Talent Challenge for St Mary's. And when you remember that a day's wage at the time was only one penny, I reckon that to repay a talent would take 200,000 days' wages. Even if you worked every day (except the Sabbath, of course) and put all the money you earned into repaying just one talent, you would take about 639 years to repay the loan.

Once we know the size of a 'talent', my original objection begins to be put into perspective. The whole point is that they have been given something beyond price.

Hold on! A loan you cannot possibly repay? Jesus is telling a story of our time! We hear a lot about loans from banks that cannot be repaid.

But this story might also set us thinking about what is it that God gives us that is so completely unrepayable...

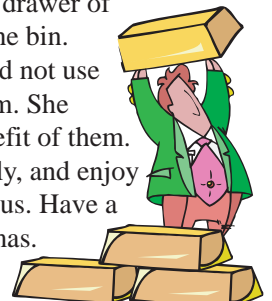
This is what is unfair. We have all been given something so valuable that we cannot possibly repay it. We have been given life. All we can do is use it. This is why LIFE is unfair. We have each been given infinitely precious life and a

world to live it in. Both are just staggeringly wonderful. And we have been given them. We have been allowed to do what we will with them.

At Christmas we remember the first time Jesus came to us, and one day he will come back to see how we have been getting on. What will he find? What will his reaction be? We have been trusted to do something with our lives and not just bury them or waste them. Don't compare your life with the person next to you - Each life is completely unique. Do something good with yours.

The old lady had always had a strange attitude to gifts. If she was given a gift she would thank the person profusely and say how kind it was of them. Then, without unwrapping it, she would put it away in a drawer. 'For later' she said. When a niece came to help her move, she discovered many unused gifts, still in that drawer and still wrapped. There were cakes and nice biscuits that had moulded away. There were jars of fine things long past their use-by date. There were clothes that she would no longer fit into. Drawer after drawer of gifts were put in the bin.

Because she did not use them, she lost them. She never had the benefit of them. We must use wisely, and enjoy all that God gives us. Have a wonderful Christmas.



Saturday 13th December 10.00 - 12.30

In our next action-packed King of Kings Kids Club we shall be thinking about the Light of the World as we gear up for Christmas. Parents are invited in at 12.30 for coffee and mince pies and to see what we have done. Places are limited, so please ring Maureen Lockyer on 01725 552492 to book.



Soup Lunches

As we all need comfort food at this time of the year, our soup lunches continue on the third Wednesday of the month – 17th December and 21st January. Come along from 12.30pm and meet new and old friends, and have some good home-made soup and bread and tea or coffee. All for only £2, with profits going to the Trussell Trust, working with the disadvantaged in Salisbury and abroad. Fairly traded goods are also available, with the profits going to World Vision.

Midweek Holy Communion

Our midweek Holy Communion, using the 1662 Prayer Book, is at Sixpenny Handley on the first Wednesday of each month at 11.30am, followed by coffee. Please join us.

Come and meet friends

Bible Study – Meeting on Thursdays, returning to Wednesdays in the New Year, to explore the most important book ever. Details from Heather on 01725 552308.

Fellowship Group – Continuing on Tuesdays for chat, laughter and biscuits, some serious talk and sometimes a steak supper or Chinese takeaway!

Men's Group – a beer and a good old chat on the last Thursday of the month. Phone David Lockyer on 552492

Mothers' Union – meet monthly on Thursday afternoons. Phone Jean on 552692 or Mary on 552041

Prayertime – the bedrock of all our lives. We meet (almost) every Monday at 7.30pm for an hour of prayer. Phone Paul Skinner on 772785.

Join us during December and January

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary the Virgin Sixpenny Handley	St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew
	Informal service includes children's group 9.30am ☕	11.00am 6.00pm	11.15am 9.30am
Dec 7th	HC	Informal Evensong	HC
Dec 14th	Prayer	Informal HC	HC
Dec 21st	HC	Informal Carols	Prayer
Dec 28th	Prayer	Inf & HC HC	HC
Jan 4th	HC	Informal Evensong	HC
Jan 11th	Prayer	Informal HC	HC
Jan 18th	HC	Informal Evensong	Prayer
Jan 25th	Prayer	Inf & HC HC	HC

Christmas Services

Friday December 19th	6.00pm	Carols at Gussage St Andrew
Sunday December 21st	6.00pm	Carols at St Mary's
Monday December 22nd	6.00pm	Carols at Pentridge
Christmas Eve	5.00pm	Christingle Service, St Mary's
	11.30pm	Midnight Holy Communion, St Mary's
Christmas Day	9.30am	Christmas Family Service (HC), St Mary's
	11.15am	Holy Communion at St Rumbold's, Pentridge

HC = Holy Communion

always a warm welcome...



December 2008

See website for updates

Mon 1st	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tue 2nd	7.00pm	Alpha Course, 14 High Street, Sixpenny Handley
Wed 3rd	11.30am	Holy Communion, Sixpenny Handley
	7.00pm	WI Carol Service, Sixpenny Handley
Thurs 4th	7.30pm	Bible Study, 10 Sycamore Close
Mon 8th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tues 9th	2.00pm	Mothers' Union Carol Service, Blandford
	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Thurs 11th	2.45pm	Mothers' Union, Christmas meeting, 15 Paddock Cl
Sat 13th	10.00am	King of Kings Kids' Club, Sixpenny Handley
Sun 14th	2.30pm	Scouts Christmas Service, Sixpenny Handley
Mon 15th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tue 16th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group, 11 The Parsonage, Handley
Wed 17th	12.30pm	Soup Lunch, the Vicarage
Thur 16th	7.30pm	Bible Study
Fri 19th	6.00pm	Carol Service at Gussage St Andrew
Sat 20th	5.30pm	Carols in the Barn, Woodyates
Sun 21st	6.00pm	Carol Service, Sixpenny Handley
Mon 22nd	6.00pm	Carol Service, Pentridge
Wed 24th	5.00pm	Christingle, Sixpenny Handley
	11.30pm	Midnight Holy Communion, Sixpenny Handley
Thurs 25th	9.30am	Family Holy Communion, Sixpenny Handley
	11.15am	Holy Communion, Pentridge
Mon 5th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage



January 2009

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Tue 6th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group, dinner at the Roebuck
Wed 5th	11.30am	Holy Communion, Sixpenny Handley
Thurs 8th	2.45pm	Mothers' Union AGM Plus, 15 Paddock Close
Mon 12th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tue 13th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group, 11 The Parsonage, Handley
Mon 19th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tue 20th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group, 11 The Parsonage, Handley
Wed 21st	12.30pm	Soup Lunch, the Vicarage
	7.30pm	Bible Study
Mon 26th	7.30pm	Prayertime at the Vicarage
Tue 27th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group, 11 The Parsonage, Handley
Thurs 29th	7.30pm	Men's Group