

The Link



The magazine for the Methodist Churches at Aldbourne,
Christchurch (inc URC), Pewsey and Ramsbury

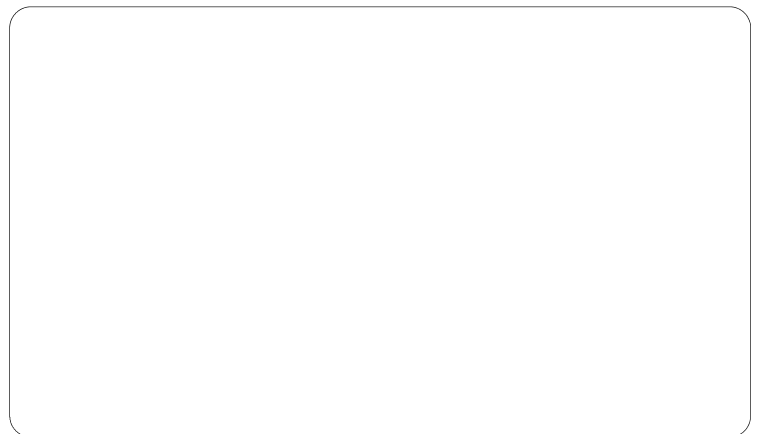


David and Samantha Hunter on their happy day

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The eight-inch knitted Nativity figures are spreading the Christmas message

The Link

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No 131 Nov/Dec 2010

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**Could you be a Link Editor? More are urgently needed.
 Contact Phil Price for more details and to offer your help!**

The Link is a monthly magazine produced by and for Aldbourne Methodist Church, Christchurch Marlborough, Pewsey Methodist Church and Ramsbury Methodist Church. Together they form the Marlborough District of the Swindon circuit, and Christchurch, a combined Methodist/URC church, is part of the South West Synod of the URC. Christchurch is part of Marlborough Churches Together.

Articles, poems, photographs, personal stories, jokes and suggestions for articles are wanted for each edition — please send to:

- ✉ office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk (put the word **Link** in the subject line)
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We prefer to receive articles as Word documents or emails, however submissions on paper are welcome. Views expressed in the Link are those of individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of

Copy Deadline for next issue: Sunday 16th January 2011

MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

I was first introduced to Las Posadas in Aldbourne two years ago and am delighted to see it is becoming a popular way of celebrating Advent across the country and has now reached Marlborough too. Advent continues to be in danger of being absorbed into Christmas so this is a useful way of highlighting it as a season in its own right. For those of us who don't receive Tower and Town where Annie Studdert-Kennedy writes about the custom, allow me to explain.....

In 1578, a faithful priest called Friar Diego de Soria, was pondering with God how he might engage his congregation in prayer over the Advent season. Being the creative man that he was, he came up with the idea of Las Posadas. Posadas literally means Inns or Shelters, and is a re-enactment of Mary and Joseph travelling from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of somewhere to stay. The idea of Las Posadas is that your home becomes a temporary shelter for Mary and Joseph, as a model of the couple with their donkey in England often knitted) passes from household to household every 24 hours. You are invited to take them with you – whether to school, workplace, or on your daily routine – and think about what it means to be journeying with them and waiting with them for Christ to be born.

The festival begins on December 16th. See if there's a set being passed around in your community and if not, knitters might like to start one for Advent 2011.

Some traditions speak of 'The Holy Family' and a visit to an Egyptian Coptic Christian web site tells me that there is quite a history of the Holy Family's travels around that country when Mary, Joseph and Jesus were refugees there. Who were Jesus' family as he grew up? Matthew and Mark tell us James, Joses, Simon and Judas were 'brothers' and there were also sisters but it's not clear how many since 'all' can mean 'two' in Greek. Later Christian tradition tells us they were Mary and Salome. All very popular names at the time.

Of course 'brother' doesn't have to mean blood brother and since the C4th Christians have been debating who they were. Perhaps they were brothers born after Jesus, perhaps they were sons of Joseph by a previous marriage or some say they were cousins.

What is important is that Jesus had a human, ordinary upbringing despite the angels and eastern travellers heralding a child divine and unique at his birth. He experienced the best that families provide but there is no reason to leave out the worst too! Yes, I am sure there were rows and awkward relatives, squabbling children and tired parents who didn't always agree on the best way to bring up the Saviour of the World. As we don't hear about Joseph after Jesus was twelve, it is likely that this family also experienced the trauma of bereavement.

I disagree with the popular saying that Christmas is about families but there is certainly a focus on family during the festival that can delight or dismay us. There is no situation that our families—or lack of family—can throw at us this season that we cannot talk to God about honestly and receive his reassurance that He will guide us through the mayhem!

May you have calm in this time of preparation and peace at Christmas

With every blessing *Susan*



Rev Susan Holden

YOUTH NEWS

www.devotion-marlborough.co.uk

We are hoping that Devotion's website will become a hub for information, discussion and community. On it you'll find Devotion's calendar where you can find out what's going on week-to-week, along with pages for each of our activities and our current programme. You'll also be able to find out about and sign up for our upcoming special events, like Riding Light's "Origins and Lemons" production. There will be a link to the Devotion website on the Marlborough Anglican Churches and Christchurch's website, and our website links back to each of these. The internet is a fantastic tool for us to interact with each other no matter where we are.

We want the website to be constantly re-created and developed by the young people. There are password-protected forums for young people, their parents, project volunteers and our alumni to share information, discuss things we talk about in our groups, share photos and videos, and ask questions. There will be an online catalogue of all the books/music and DVDs that we have in the Devotion office so friends of Devotion can borrow this material. And there is a space for updates from our members away at University, so we can pray for them while they are not with us.

We hope that you will find the website useful for keeping up with what our project is getting up to. The website is moderated and we will be using it alongside facebook to communicate with our friends. If you have any questions about the website or any suggestions then please let me know.

Peta

07584 498664



Peta O'Brian

CHRISTCHURCH WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

We began October with our Harvest Festival on 5th October, followed on 12th by Miss Janet Ruddick and on 19th by Mrs Kitty Boxall, who as always brought a lovely display of articles for sale, plus some Christmas Cards. On 26th we had a visit from Mr Bill Hewis from the Leprosy Mission who brought us up to date with the work of the Mission.



Edith Terry

RAMSBURY NEWS

Methodist Church Services

5th Dec 10.30am (Holy Communion) Joint Service at Aldbourne (No service at Ramsbury)

12th Dec 10.30am Worship Service led by Mr Brian Hunter
3pm Seasonal Carol Service with Ramsbury Silver Band

19th Dec No 10.30am Service at Ramsbury 3pm Carols Service at Christchurch
Christmas Day 10.30am Communion Service at Christchurch (No service at Ramsbury)

26th Dec No Service at Ramsbury (10am Circuit Service at Bath Road)

2nd January 10.30am Worship Service at Ramsbury led by Mr Paul Adams

There will be Carol Singing 'Around the Tree' with the Ramsbury Silver Band on Monday 20th December at 7pm. Mince pies and Hot drinks will be served at the Chapel Hall afterwards.

If you have not been to church before, but would like to try it. Please come along you will be most welcome. We are a very friendly lot!

Jumble Sale News

A total £167 was raised on Saturday 25th September in aid of the Methodist Church. A big thank you to everyone for their help.

Christmas Fair Saturday December 4th at the Methodist Church. 10am until 12pm. Father Christmas will visit during the morning! (This is a table top sale, if you like to book a table please call Sue Barnes on 520558 - Tables will be £8 each. Buyers also very welcome!

Coffee Centre

Thurs 2nd Dec 9.30am Cake stall. 9th Dec 9.30am Craft Stall

16th Dec 9.30am - Christmas Lucky Prize Draw at 10am

Coffee morning will be back again from 13th January 2011

If you like to hire The Church or hall for a meeting or party please call Sue Barnes on 520558.

Christmas lights News

Christmas lights will be back again this year, but with only a few houses lighting up at Whitehill Close in aid of Prospect Hospice. Please bring along the children on Wednesday December 1st when the lights will be turned on at about 6.30pm and Father Christmas will welcome the Children. Lights on until after Christmas.

Merry Christmas and all the Best for 2011 from all at Ramsbury.

Julie Coe

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Thank you to the large number of members and friends who supported the recent 'Talent' audio-visual evening with ploughman's supper, which raised the considerable sum of £515 for church funds.

Eric and Eileen Gilbert



Eric Gilbert

ALDBOURNE HARVEST APPEAL—AHA

On Sunday 7th November we held our Community Service in St Michaels Church, This service, for the last three years, has been organised by the Accord group which is a group of 4 Methodists and 4 Anglicans trying to think of ways to enhance the community spirit of this marvellous village. For the last two years our focus for the harvest appeal has been for the Swindon Food Bank, and we had an excellent response from various of the village organisations who either donated money or tins of food. Richard Belsham and his wife from the Swindon Food Bank were our honoured guests at the service and Richard gave an excellent presentation on how the money and goods were used by the Food Bank. The organisations brought up their gifts and told us how they had raised the money or collected the tins. It was a lovely service taken by the Curate the Rev Sue Rodd, and we were delighted to have raised well over £1,000 and innumerable boxes of tinned food. **Isabel Sewell**

FEDERATION NEWS

Many of you will remember that the Swindon and Marlborough Circuit are now in a Federation with the Upper Thames and Chippenham Circuits. To help us get to know one another and feel part of this new whole, a book for each person to sign has been travelling across the Federation, jumping from chapel to chapel, taken by the Senior Stewards. Each church has been invited to send a small gift of greeting too. Here's what we will be sending in our section:



Christchurch to Abbey Meads Upper Thames 6th Feb 2011 - giving a banner



Ramsbury to Lechlade 1st April 2012 - giving a framed, handwritten copy of a Ramsbury Carol.



Pewsey to Purton 27th November 2011— giving an engraved devotional candle holder



Aldbourne to Shaw 9th January 2011 - tba

We receive the book and gift on the Sunday before the above dates so expect more for coffee after the service!

The Senior Stewards all have the details.

Susan

THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

The Pastor was looking over the crèche the day after Christmas when he noticed that the baby Jesus was missing. He went outside and saw a little boy pulling a new red wagon. In the wagon was Jesus

We walked up to the boy and said, "Hi, there. Where did you get the baby Jesus?" The boy answered honestly, "In the church."

"Why did you take him?" the pastor asked.

"Well," said the boy, "I prayed to the Lord Jesus and asked him for a wagon for Christmas. I told Him that if He gave me one, I'd take Him for a ride in it."

‘MESSY CHURCH’ AT ALDBOURNE

What a mess!

Things really got messy in Aldbourne’s Methodist Hall on Halloween, when nearly 30 children, ranging in age from 5 months to 13 years, with about the same number of attendant adult family members, gathered for an afternoon of ‘Messy Church.’

The theme was ‘Who is my neighbour?’ and the children were issued with travel documents for a twelve-stage journey from Jerusalem to Jericho with the Good Samaritan. So (using vast quantities of sparkly stuff!) they made beautiful moneyboxes and foreign coin rubbings to put inside, and smart sandals for the journey. They decorated beautifully iced cupcakes to provide food for the journey.

The children also made gloriously messy paint footprints and handprints. A long and splendid ‘friendship paper chain’ carried the names of hundreds of special people, and a huge and sticky collage had pictures of all sorts of different people who help us, or whom we might help in our turn.

We went into the Chapel itself for a short time of worship. We sang songs and listened to the story of the Good Samaritan, hearing how help came to a man in trouble from an unexpected source, and we asked for God’s help in being good neighbours ourselves.

Everyone - children and adults - got stuck into hot dogs made with scrumptious sausages from the Marlborough Food Festival, with salad and crisps, followed by the elaborately iced cupcakes the children had made earlier.

Many of the things the children had made were taken home, but the large items were destined for the next week’s Community Service to mark the end of the A-Ha! United Harvest Appeal in St Michael’s Church, continuing the theme of good neighbourliness.

It’s hoped that the next ‘Messy Church’ will be in January; watch out for details nearer the time. Contact Sue Rodd (541571) or Kate Hart (540457) for information or to offer help. Meal tickets (for catering numbers; no charge) will be available from Aldbourne School and Post Office.

BIBLE BRAIN TWISTER

There are 17 books of the bible hidden in the following passage See how many you can identify and we will give you the answers in the next edition of The Link.

I once made a remark about the hidden books of the Bible. It was a lulu, kept people looking so hard for facts, and for others it was a revelation. Some were in a jam, especially since the names of the books are not capitalised, but the truth finally struck home to numbers of readers. To others it was a real job. We want it to be a most fascinating few moments for you. Yes: there will be some really easy ones to spot. Others may require judges to help them. I will quickly admit it usually takes a minister to find one of the 17, and there will be loud lamentations when it is found. A little lady says she brews a cup of tea so she can concentrate better.

See how well you can compete. Relax now, but for all those at sea, there are really are 17 books of the Bible in these sentences. (One preacher found 16 books in 20 minutes. It took him three weeks to find the seventeenth one) *Found in a Canadian Church Magazine*

EPISODE I FROM CHLOE

Here's my first round robin!

Where do I start?

You'll all individually make of this what you will - what you *will* it to be, it will be to you.

School is just amazing. It's been a crazy or we might say a 'gnarly' couple of months, I've never been in a position to absorb so much good teaching, It's quite overwhelming at times! It's like being at the best Christian conference you'll ever go to, for 9 months... Trying to organise my thoughts at the end of the day and work out the one, or three, or simply ten, things that God was wanting me to hear and 'set up camp on', after five hours of 'heavy revy' (amazing revelation about stuff) takes it outta you! That's 'fo sho'.. (for sure). First year here is often referred to as a year of 'open heart surgery', anything that is restricting you from being the most you and best you they encourage out. It's ultimately about freedom and peace and those things sometimes cost you a little (like letting go of pride and allowing people in to your stuff that's ugly - ways you think or verbalising things you do that you wish you didn't - trusting their love for you), but trusting the goodness of what lies on the other side makes it possible and worth what's sometimes, for example, not a 'pleasant' memory that comes up that it's time to let go of or release with forgiveness.

I've met some of the best people I've ever met, and made some amazing friends for life. I've never known people who love like people love here; fearless, furious, sacrificially, superbly. There's a truly phenomenal wealth of people all more interested in you - then they are in themselves.

These are a few of things that *have* happened, not the things that haven't, why would I talk about those!

Let me first tell you about my friend Sarah inviting Jesus to change the life of a paralysed mother in a wheelchair in town last Thursday, He did - and they left the wheelchair on the side of the road for someone else who needed it as she didn't anymore.

I've just left my friend Kaysha who was in a serious road accident in 2007 and still suffered from hip and back problems restricting among other things her walking and sleeping (she'd had to sleep in a rocking chair or upright on a couch to be comfortable). Last Thursday we watched her stand in response to a call for peeps with back or neck issues, and then sit back down sorted. She was just now telling us about her week; sleeping well in her bed and able to run for the first time in three years or so.

I've also had break through this week, I felt grace for praying for two friends - one last Friday and the other yesterday in Walmart (you know you're in America when you find yourself in Walmart), both suffering with muscular issues, I laid hands on them a couple of times, concentrated on Jesus and they were sorted. What better way to love on your friends riiiiight?!

What's new with you?

Come and visit if you can—

Chloe

A NEW MINISTER—UPDATE

The process of finding a replacement minister for the Marlborough Section of the Circuit when Susan leaves us next September, is moving on. Following the work of the Circuit Invitation Committee over the past few weeks, I received on Thursday 11 November an eagerly awaited telephone call from Revd Ward Jones, Chairman of the Bristol Methodist District. This was to advise me that Revd Heather Cooper, Superintendent of the Morley, Leeds, Circuit, had expressed a strong interest in the appointment. On Friday the 12th I spoke to Mrs Cooper and invited her to come to Marlborough on Monday the 15th. The day will be a busy one involving visits to each of the four churches in the Section, conversations with the Invitation Committee and a time to meet and greet members at Christchurch in the afternoon. It is anticipated that by the end of the day the Committee will have reached a decision as to whether a formal invitation should be made to Mrs Cooper to join us. Your prayers in recent days for a satisfactory outcome to this whole process have been greatly appreciated by all involved.

Following the meetings with the Churches on 15th November I am delighted to report that Revd Heather Cooper has accepted the appointment and will join the Circuit next autumn. We give thanks to God and ask you to pray for her and her husband and for Susan as she prepares to move on to pastures new.



Alison Harris

Stop Press! Susan has been invited and has accepted the post of Superintendent Minister in the Salisbury Circuit from next Autumn.

Senior Circuit Steward

NO ROOM IN THE DOME

When Jesus came to Bethlehem, Two thousand years ago,
There was no room in humble Inn- no place for him to go.
The town was full of families all waiting to be taxed,
They went about their business quite carefree and relaxed,
They had no time for sentiment; they did not even care,
That every place was taken, no need for them to share!

When Jesus came to London Town, his birth to celebrate,
They built a Dome at great expense and asked men to donate
The money that would be required- to give him prominence,
To make his birth a central theme, to show his relevance,
'What profit will there be for us? What perks will we receive?
For sponsorship of such a scheme? You must think we're naive!'

And so despite two thousand years of Christian influence;
Despite the benefits bestowed by God's omnipotence;
Despite the crucifixion and Christ's rising from the tomb,
Men have not learned their lesson yet, for still he has no room.

John Harris, Morecambe Methodist Newsletter!

CHRISTMAS FRUIT SALAD

This is the most delicious Kath Kidson fruit salad that I have been preparing for Christmas day lunch the last few years. Editor

Serves 12

400ml water

400g granulated sugar

Rind of 1 lemon, in broad strips

Juice of 2 lemons

200ml cassis

2 bay leaves

800g plums (preferably with red flesh), stoned and quartered

16 fresh figs

2 nectarines

400g mixed berries (blueberries, raspberries and strawberries) and seedless black grapes

Seeds from 1 pomegranate

Put the water, sugar, lemon rind and juice, cassis and bay leaves into a saucepan and bring slowly to the boil, stirring gently to help the sugar dissolve. Add the plums and poach very gently for three minutes. Lift out immediately with a slotted spoon and put in a broad flat dish. Simmer the liquid for five minutes more then leave to cool completely. Strain the syrup.

Cut the figs in half, without cutting all the way through. Slice the nectarines. Put these, the grapes and the berries (except the strawberries) in the dish with the plums and pour over the syrup. Leave to soak for a couple of hours. Add the strawberries and pomegranate seeds before serving.

CHRISTMAS FRUIT LOOP

Makes 24 small glasses

1.2 litres apple juice

1.2 litres blackcurrant and cranberry juice (ocean spray make this)

600ml water

100ml elderflower cordial

Chopped apple and berries (eg redcurrants, blackberries or blueberries)

Combine all the liquids together in a large jug—add the fruit and

HAVE A HAPPY CHRISTMAS!!!

KEEPING ST. NICK, THE MAN AND NOT THE MYTH, ALIVE

More and more churches are finding ways to practice the St. Nicholas story.

Kim Lawton, Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

'Tis the season of Christmas and Santa Claus, it seems, is everywhere. Children anxiously await his gift-bearing arrival, but some Christians are worried that most of those children — and their parents — don't know who "jolly old Saint Nicholas" really was.

"St. Nicholas was a real person. Not a fairy, not someone who's flying through the sky with reindeer, but an actual person who lived and worked and died and had a full life," said Canon Jim Rosenthal. "He had a Christian life because he was actually a bishop, a pastor."

Rosenthal, director of communications for the worldwide Anglican Communion office, is founder of the St. Nicholas Society UK/USA, an international movement urging churches to reclaim St. Nicholas.

Every year, Rosenthal dresses up like St. Nicholas, complete with a bishop's staff, called a crozier, and hat, called a mitre. He visits churches to help spread the St. Nicholas message.

"If we don't recover this tradition, I believe that we are going to eventually lose Christmas, any semblance of a religious Christmas," he said.

Nicholas was born in Asia Minor when the new Christian faith was beginning to spread across the Roman Empire.

"He came from a very wealthy family," Rosenthal said. "His parents died at an early age. His uncle was a priest, and he became a priest like his uncle."

Nicholas rose to leadership in the early church and was named Bishop of Myra, a city on the southern coast of what is now Turkey. During a period of persecution, he was imprisoned. He was eventually released and continued his ministry until his death on December 6 in 343.

"He was known for his generosity and his goodwill because he was very rich," Rosenthal said. "He literally, by the end of his life, gave away all of his fortune. Many stories talk about the fact that he was so generous that he became known as the 'Gift Giver.'"

More and more churches in the United States and the United Kingdom are finding ways to keep the St. Nicholas story alive. In Chicago, for example, St. James Cathedral recently hosted a special St. Nicholas exhibit.

"The stories of St. Nicholas are wonderful stories of a bishop who cared about his people, who cared very much about the poor," said the Rev. Joy E. Rogers, provost of the cathedral.

There are numerous tales of Nicholas doing good deeds — performing miracles, calming the seas, stopping famine and rescuing children. Separating truth and myth is sometimes difficult.

"My guess is that some of the fanciful stories that have moved into the realm of legend and miracle had their roots in very concrete acts of very real kindness and generosity," Rogers said.

One of the most famous stories involves a poor family who couldn't afford marriage dowries for their three daughters.

KEEPING ST. NICK, THE MAN AND NOT THE MYTH, ALIVE CONTINUED

"The parents were going to have to sell them off into slavery or into prostitution or whatever," Rogers said. "And St. Nicholas came by the house at night and dropped off three bags of golden coins."

Some legends say he secretly tossed the bags of gold through an open window, and one landed in stockings or shoes that were drying by the fire, thus launching the tradition of the Christmas stocking. Pawnbrokers have especially embraced that story.

"If you go to a pawnbroker shop you'll see three gold balls," Rosenthal said. "Those represent the three bags of gold, which we now turn into chocolate coins, that St. Nicholas threw through the window to save three girls from slavery or prostitution."

Nicholas has been adopted by many groups beyond pawnbrokers.

"So many people wanted him as theirs that he's the patron saint of almost everything: unwed mothers, children — which, of course, is the most prominent, pawnbrokers, and sailors and merchants and cookie makers, apothecaries. You just name it and he's got something to do with it."

Many European countries have a long tradition of celebrating the Feast Day of St. Nicholas on Dec. 6. Then St. Nicholas evolved into Santa Claus and got all tied up with Christmas.

"If you look at the name Santa Claus, you will see 'Santa' means saint and 'Claus' is simply an abbreviation from Nicholas," Rosenthal said. "But the reality is he became a secular image."

American writers and advertisers helped disseminate a new myth that made no mention of the jolly old saint's religious connections.

Church leaders emphasize that Nicholas' generosity was motivated by his Christian faith, that he was following Jesus' command to love others, to help those who are suffering and to do one's good deeds in secret.

"The problem with Santa Claus as it stands now is that it's a substitute for Christmas — Santa Claus instead of the crèche, instead of the manger, instead of the nativity scene," said Rosenthal. "This man we would find kneeling at the nativity scene saying, 'This is what I'm here to celebrate as well.'"

c. 2008 Religion & Ethics Newsweekly

LETTER FROM KATE

The shops are decked out with red, green and silver displays; our High Street Christmas lights are up and waiting expectantly for the moment of illumination; television adverts are gearing up for the big spend as we are all sliding helplessly towards the annual Christmas festivities.

The growing tide of tinsel, turkeys and toys is exciting but also depressing because it heralds long dark nights, grey miserable days and cold weather which prevents our older folks from venturing out. Many of those I visit see Winter as a kind of prison sentence. A time when regular meetings have to be cancelled because of bad weather, shopping becomes a problem, no visitors manage to call at the door and it is a real problem keeping warm and comfortable.

Cont/d.....

LETTER FROM KATE (continued...)

But in this age of easy communication there are things we can do to ease the problems. A regular telephone call to an elderly person can mean so much. It provides contact with the outside world and a chance to share worries or problems. And if you find you cannot get out, then do remember that others are in the same position and would love to hear from you.

We all have church directories and can therefore identify those older people living close by. When you pop out for your shopping don't forget to ask if your neighbour needs anything from the shops. If we experience a spell of snow and ice as we did earlier this year then the regular deliveries of pre-packed frozen meals which many of our older folk use may not get through. Can you cook a little extra and offer a plate of food to someone in need?

Finally to all my older friends I say, if help is offered to you please accept it as, in doing so, you affirm the gift of generosity in others. Remember by the time we celebrate Christmas the shortest day of the year will be passed, the days will be lengthening and we will have crocuses and birdsong to look forward to.

Stay in touch

Kate Trowbridge, Seniors Worker.

COMMENT

This newsletter is being finalised as we commemorate Remembrance Sunday. The importance of continuing this tradition should never be diminished as we move into the decade that will mark the centenary of the original eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

Perhaps equally important to remember are the countless Christians who are being persecuted simply because they believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ. In the past decade, half a million Christians have fled Iraq and for those who remain there is the constant threat of injury or death as evidenced by the attack on a church in Baghdad last month.

Perhaps as we remember the fallen and also take heart as we start to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us not forget that our prayers should also be with those who have less than ourselves - both physically and emotionally - and lift up those whose faith means they are subject to harassment, discrimination and even torture.

A happy and blessed Christmas to all.

Ian and Carole Walker



CIRCUIT PLANS

If you would like to receive future Circuit Plans via e-mail (as a PDF) please contact Chrissy in the Church Office. Tuesday or Friday 10am - 12noon .

Telephone: 01672 513701 or email: office@christchurchmarlborough.org.uk.

THE BLESSING

Walking along my path I saw a Blessing
I bent a while to feel its warmth and light
I picked it up and walked a while longer
Holding that Blessing tight

Further down the track I jumped a hurdle
I thought I was going to fall
But the Blessing I had safe inside me
Softened the blow to my soul

At the moments I was most exhausted
Kind arms lifted me from the ground
The moments I was crying in darkness
Were the ones when the most love was found

Sometimes I see Blessings in people
The glance of someone catching my eye
A gesture I least expected or the beauty in a windswept sky
I sometimes feel Blessings in memories
As they fade in and out through my mind
The roll and swell of the ocean
Or a loving couple entwined

Do I walk along my journey with eyes open wide
And take time to count ALL my blessings
Or in my hurry – push them aside.

Lizzi Vandorpe

JOY TO CHILDREN AT CHRISTMAS TIME

Operation Christmas Child Gift Wrap Day 2010 was on the 20 November. Pewsey and Christchurch have been supporting this organisation for the last 10 years and last year over 700 boxes were sent to children in 14 different countries. Shoeboxes are given to children who are victims of poverty, war, disease or natural disaster on the basis of need alone.

The care and thought with which this is done reflects the desire to do something to help children in places where materials such as soap and toothpaste are too expensive for families to buy. There are key workers from Samaritans Purse, the parent organisation, that help in the distribution to make sure the shoeboxes go to needy families. These key workers are based there all the year round to help meet the needs of the communities with which they are in contact.

A Grand Total of 687 boxes were filled and sent this year .Well done to all the contributors, packers and checkers!

REMEMBERING THE '101'

Last year I received an e-mail from the USAF 101 Airborne Division in Afghanistan thanking Rev Ann Massey and myself for 'everything that we were doing in Aldbourne' and how the 'guys out there were very touched.'



We had not stopped to think that news of Remembrance Sunday in our pretty village would have got that far!

'The Screaming Eagles' as they are still known were billeted in Aldbourne, Ramsbury, Froxfield and Chilton Foliat in preparation for the Normandy landings when they were joined by England's first airborne division. If you've seen 'Band of Brothers' or 'A Bridge Too Far' then you've seen the Screaming Eagles. While they trained they were lived in hut camps, stables, outbuildings and in village families. Some folk in Aldbourne still remember them walking into the village and knocking on the door to ask mother if they could 'wash their pants' (trousers). The officer's mess was found in The Blue Boar and headquarters in Littlecote House.

Today the 'Screaming Eagles' re-enactment group faithfully portray these young paratroopers who lived amongst us, trained and then fought in 1944-5. Every year they gather on the village green in uniform, often with wives and girlfriends in 1940's dress to be inspected (this year we had a lady dressed in WRVS uniform too) and then parade into the church for a service of remembrance. The importance of the occasion is demonstrated by the attendance of an officer from the American Embassy, and this year by an officer from the Swindon Training Academy. (I didn't know there was an American military training academy in Swindon!). They come with their families, delighted by the typical English scene and marvelling at the age of the church!

This year a rifle had been stood upright on a white wooden stand with an American helmet on top. It was a powerful image especially in church. During the service the American and 101 flags were brought forward and crossed over the rifle. The Colonel from the Embassy expressed his gratitude in heartfelt terms. Aldbourne really does have a 'special relationship' with The States!

The only shadow over the afternoon for me personally was the American National Anthem. The words are ghastly – do look them up. At least this year we only sang two verses instead of six and the Vicar, Simon, says next year we'll get it down to one!

As I looked over the village green from the church porch as the men and women stood at ease (and not a telegraph pole or satellite dish in sight, I could well believe myself taken back in time and the reality of the bravery of these men was powerful indeed.

Susan Holden

A HAPPY DAY AT CHRISTCHURCH

Saturday 23 October was a memorable day for at least two of our members, it being the Wedding Day of those two stalwarts of our church, David Hunter and Samantha d'Prout. A showery morning did nothing to dampen the spirits of everyone who shared in a wonderfully uplifting service, brought to life by a radiant bride and a groom who looked like the cat who had got the cream! The service was conducted by a friend of the happy couple, the former vicar of St Mary's in Marlborough, Revd Canon Henry Pearson, assisted by our own minister, Susan. The meticulously prepared Order of Service went without a hitch, with the music provided by our own Gill, Rob and Philip Groves on trumpet. The congregation sang their hearts out in hymns old and new.

The reception which followed involved a trip to Bath, where the guests were royally entertained by the superb catering staff at Kingswood School, David's *alma mater*. (This school was, of course, founded in the 18th century by John Wesley himself). After a sumptuous meal the more energetic guests indulged in some gentle terpsichorean activity ie dancing!

We wish David and Samantha a long and happy life together - with Liam on hand to see fair play.

Rob Harris

I have known David Hunter since he was only a few days old. I met his mother Pat outside the special care baby unit at the old Princess Margaret's Hospital and she said, "He has been born but he is very small and he needs praying for."

We could stop praying for him to grow in size couldn't we?

But I am sure we would agree that the prayers we prayed over his future happiness have also been answered. David has blossomed and grown under Sam's love and care. We who knew him noticed the change almost immediately it just seems that they have taken so long to let us celebrate a wedding as we did on 23rd October this year.

It was a truly fun event, and they both seemed very relaxed and to enjoy themselves immensely, we were privileged to be invited to their reception too and enjoyed their renowned hospitality there too.

Sam and David had left no detail to chance and had clearly put a lot of work and themselves into the details and organisation. We pray that theirs will be a long and happy union, not free from any difficulties because life has them, but that they will face them with the care and love which is so evident between them, they were made by God for each other.

Congratulations to them both for letting God's plan work.

Naomi Painter

See picture on front page