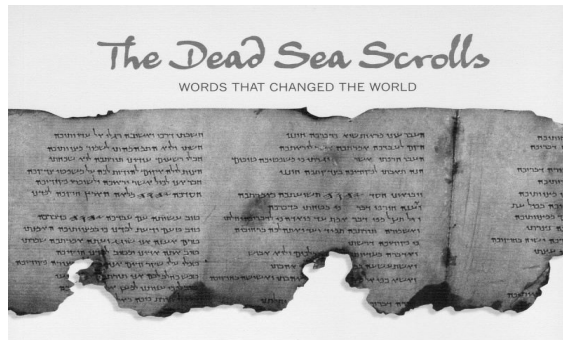


A Priceless Find – by accident!



71 years ago this month a couple of shepherds in the hills above Qumran near the Dead Sea idly threw a stone into what they thought was an empty cave.

When they heard the sound of smashing pottery they searched inside, and found the most important biblical discovery of the century. Their stone had led them to what became known as the Dead Sea Scrolls, manuscripts of the entire Hebrew Bible except for the book of Esther, stored in clay vessels. The scrolls were the work of a religious community called the Essenes, who lived near that site before and during the life of Jesus.

As scholars slowly unraveled them – and that task took decades - they discovered that they were handling manuscripts of the Bible which were hundreds of years older than any we had previously possessed. Most of the biblical manuscripts on which our translations had previously been based were copies of copies, carefully crafted in monasteries over the centuries by people dedicated to preserving the sacred text. But inevitably, in the process, there were occasional slips in the copying, and at times it's obvious that those who were doing it didn't understand the words they were copying.

So, in February 1947, the world had access to a much older and therefore more accurate record of the Jewish Scriptures – the Bible of Jesus and the first Christians. The most remarkable thing is actually how few 'mistakes' there were, seeing the centuries of copying – and not one that seriously affects our fundamental understanding of the Bible.

Those two shepherds 71 years ago, ensured that we today have a Bible text which is as close to the original as one could ever hope to get. I'm glad they threw the stone into the right cave!

David Winter



Dear Friends,

The eagle eyed will have noticed that we have an interesting coincidence of dates this year.

Ash Wednesday is on 14th February, most commonly remembered as St Valentine's Day and moreover Easter this year is on April 1st! This offers much in the way of creative ideas for sermons so watch this space. (The last time Easter day was on April 1st was, I think, 1956!!!)

So Lent will be upon us soon and as you will see elsewhere in the magazine it is and will be an opportunity to reflect on our relationship with God and the things that God promises to us or have been promised to God's people through the ages.

Many people are facing very difficult situations in their personal lives at the moment and it is at times when life is hard that we need to be held by God's promises to us. The promise never was for an easy life, but it was for an accompanied one.

Often at funerals we hear the words of John 14.6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life.". I will often reflect on those words as Jesus as the sat nav who comes with us on the journey showing us the way ahead, guiding us through or round diversions, warning us of blockages and getting us eventually to the point "You have reached your destination". Obviously sometimes sat navs go wrong and Jesus doesn't but sometimes it feels as if he has and the route we are being required to take is harder than we would like.

As we leave Christmas behind and walk towards Lent we remember Jesus Emmanuel "God with us" is not just for Christmas but for all the year round.

Priscilla

Aspects of life at St Faith and St Laurence

Morning prayer – is normally said Monday to Thursday and Saturday at 8.15 am in the Lady Chapel. We use Common Worship Daily Prayer, all are welcome to come and join in.

Reflections A chance to meet together over a cuppa and reflect on the Gospel reading for the previous Sunday. A group meets on Mondays from 1.45-3pm Venues are listed in the Programme of the month.

Task Groups – The church has a number of task groups enabling areas of church life. These are listed in the magazine with the contact details of the chairs. If you would like to be a part of a groups please contact the relevant chair or Priscilla. All are welcome to join.

Stay and Play meets on Thursday between 9.30 and 11am in the Hall to give a chance for people with young children to meet and the children to play. All are welcome. Cost £1.50 per family.

Sunday Club meets on the first, third and fourth Sundays of each month except during the holidays. We hold an extra Sunday Club on days when there is a baptism. All are welcome to join in hearing and experiencing a Bible Story and learning together about what it means for our daily lives.

Messy Church takes place on the first Saturday of each month, most months. A chance for children and parents/ carers to have an informal time of worship, and discovering about a Bible story through song, craft, listening, cooking and so much more. Dates are published in advance and all are welcome to come along.

Planned Giving helps people make giving regular. You decide how much you can afford to give. You can join the envelope scheme weekly or monthly or pay by Standing Order or annually by cheque. Income tax payers are asked to Gift Aid their giving, so the Church can reclaim the tax on their donations at no extra cost to the donors. For details, contact Jackie Taylor or Brenda Stott

Call in for Coffee time together over a cuppa on a Wednesday morning from 10.30 -12.00. if needed we can arrange for someone to collect you and then take you home. Please ring Pauline Sitford (427 7005). If you are passing, do call in, or bring a friend, all are welcome.

We support **Recycling**. We have a special collection on the first Sunday of every month when we collect ALUMINIUM cans and foil which can be sold and the money raised is donated to our Mission Partners in Chile (through USPG) We also have envelopes for recycling mobile phones again supporting USPG. Pauline Sitford (427 7005).

Friend, fan and football pundit Adrian Chiles said: ‘He was my absolute hero. When he made his debut, he was electrifying. It was a difficult time in Birmingham in terms of race relations and then suddenly these men, especially Cyrille, were our heroes. What they went through was horrific and, psychologically, they were made of girders to deal with the horrors that were put in front of them.’

Adrian Chiles was in the process of planning a special meal to celebrate the first time Cyrille, Laurie and Brendon Batson (known as the Three Degrees) played together for the Albion 40 years ago. Those heady days in the late 1970s were ground-breaking days for black sportsmen and women. It is thanks to the grace of Cyrille, and all he and those trailblazing players endured, that hateful racism in football grounds has been nullified. The death of Cyrille Regis was announced on Martin Luther King Day – the day the United States marks the birth of the great civil rights campaigner, who was cut down by an assassin’s bullet at the age of 39 nearly 50 years ago. Martin Luther King preached, in a sermon on Matthew 10.17, how we need Christians who have tough minds (‘shrewd as serpents’) and warm hearts (‘innocent as doves’), not weak minds and hard hearts. Cyrille had the steel of a girder running through him and the heart of kindness and love. May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

As we begin the penitential season of Lent on Valentine’s Day (February 14th) and our celebrations for Easter happen on April Fool’s Day (April 1st) may we too, like Cyrille, encounter the Risen Christ who calls us to follow him with big and generous hearts – even when others consider us to be fools.

Paul Hinton

Saint of the month– February 1st- St. Bridgid

If you are Irish, you probably know about St Brigid as a favourite Irish saint, who died about 525 A.D. Or you may know about the Celtic goddess also named Brigid. The old legends and stories often confuse these two.

There are few facts about the saint. She was a friend of St Patrick, and is said to have founded an abbey at Kildare and was hugely influential in the conversion of the people of Ireland to Christianity.

St Brigid is often portrayed holding a crozier, a lamp (of learning) and a reed cross. She and the abbesses who succeeded her in Kildare seem to have had a similar status to that of a bishop until the 12th century.

Among many other attributes Brigid is remembered for is her generosity, and not only with her own possessions

Cyrille Regis – man of God and football icon

Tributes poured in for Big Cyrille Regis as his early and unexpected death was announced at the age of 59 on January 15th. He was a trailblazer for black footballers. He was a leader of a culture of change which he accomplished with courage and grace. He was the rarest of men – loved equally by fans of fiercest rivals in West Midlands football: Albion, Coventry, Wolves and Villa. He was a follower of Jesus Christ.

Darren Moore, a fellow Christian and Albion legend, spoke of his devastation at the loss of a dear friend, that evening on Radio WM: ‘For me he was a personal dear friend, my mentor. We spoke often about the game. He helped me and developed me. He was someone I lent on a lot. I valued speaking to him. He always left me with something to consider and to move forward with. That is unique. The thing that helps me, as a Christian, is that he has gone to be with the Lord. He was a leader of people, such a warm and friendly knowledgeable man. He had presence. He was calm. You always came away with a clearer picture. He had the utmost respect. He knew how to treat people. He was a wonderful gentleman. I am speaking from the heart. This is how I will always remember him.’

Cyrille Regis was born into a Christian family, but in his early adulthood drifted away from the walk of faith. But in July 1989, the tragic death of his best friend and former Albion team-mate Laurie Cunningham in a car crash, had a significant impact on him. He told how Laurie’s death triggered deep questions such as, is there really life after death and where was God in all of this suffering? His search for answers ultimately lead him to what he described as a ‘real encounter with Jesus’ which changed his life for ever. He became a passionate ambassador for Christ as well as for football. He was a follower of Jesus and a ‘fisher of people’ in the true sense.

On his website, Cyrilleregis.com, he said: ‘I meet people all the time, some famous, some not, who are all looking for hope and peace. I have learned that money cannot buy peace of mind, so I simply tell people how I found hope and peace in God. The great thing about it is that anyone can have peace that I have. You just need to know God’

What has been overwhelmingly true from the media coverage and the response of ordinary people, has been that the character of the man has shone out above and beyond his footballing skill. But, what a player! As one of his managers, Ron Atkinson, said: ‘The biggest weakness in his game was he did not score enough bad goals. Every goal was a wonder goal.’

Home Communion We have a team of lay people trained and able to bring Home Communion usually on a monthly basis. This is for those who are unable to come to church long term. If the situation is more temporary for example after an operation you can also receive communion, usually from Priscilla. In either case please contact Priscilla.

Traidcraft

Traidcraft sells a range of fairly traded food, cards, clothes and accessories. We use Traidcraft tea and coffee and everything we buy helps fight poverty and supports our church. You can order seasonal gifts through the church at Christmas time when catalogues will be available. Any questions, please ask Ruth Jeavons or Bronwen Jones.

'easyfundraising'

Next time you shop online, think of St Faith and St Laurence and raise free donations with 3,000+ retailers:

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/stfaithandstlaurence>

Women’s Fellowship meets on the first Monday of the month from March to December. Meetings are held in the Committee Room 7.30 for 8pm. We have talks on a variety of subjects. See Programme of the Month for details.

Prayer Ministry Team

Prayer ministry is offered during the 10am Communion on Sundays. People can receive prayer for themselves or for any situation that is important to them. It takes place in the Lady Chapel during the distribution of communion.

Service with no name

This takes place on the first Thursday in the month in church at 7.30pm.

Foodbank

We collect food for the Quinton and Oldbury Foodbank. There is a box in church and food can be placed there at any time. The list of things that are needed is in church and in the hall. Food is distributed from St Boniface Church on Wednesdays and Paul and Barney's place on Fridays. Vouchers are required to receive food.

Choir and Music.

Choir Practice takes place weekly, normally on Thursdays 6-7pm. Anyone interested in singing in the choir should contact Simon Palmer, Organist & Choirmaster. (Contact details on page cover) We also like to encourage instrumentalists to perform in church, either in services or in concerts.

LENT

Taken from Services and Prayers for the Church of England Times and seasons page 211 © The Archbishops' Council 2006

Lent may originally have followed Epiphany, just as Jesus' sojourn in the wilderness followed immediately on his baptism, but it soon became firmly attached to Easter, as the principal occasion for baptism and for the reconciliation of those who had been excluded from the Church's fellowship for apostasy or serious faults. This history explains the characteristic notes of Lent – self-examination, penitence, self-denial, study, and preparation for Easter, to which almsgiving has traditionally been added.

Now is the healing time decreed
for sins of heart and word and deed,
when we in humble fear record
the wrong that we have done the Lord.

(Latin, before 12th century)

As the candidates for baptism were instructed in Christian faith, and as penitents prepared themselves, through fasting and penance, to be readmitted to communion, the whole Christian community was invited to join them in the process of study and repentance, the extension of which over forty days would remind them of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tested by Satan.

Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the middle ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross. The calculation of the forty days has varied considerably in Christian history. It is now usual in the West to count them continuously to the end of Holy Week (not including Sundays), so beginning Lent on the sixth Wednesday before Easter, Ash Wednesday. Liturgical dress is the simplest possible. Churches are kept bare of flowers and decoration. Gloria in excelsis is not used. The Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare or Refreshment Sunday) was allowed as a day of relief from the rigour of Lent, and the Feast of the Annunciation almost always falls in Lent; these breaks from austerity are the background to the modern observance of Mothering Sunday on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

As Holy Week approaches, the atmosphere of the season darkens; the readings begin to anticipate the story of Christ's suffering and death, and the reading of the Passion Narrative gave to the Fifth Sunday its name of Passion Sunday. There are many devotional exercises which may be used in Lent and Holy Week outside the set liturgy. The Stations of the Cross, made popular in the West by the Franciscans after they were granted custody of the Christian sites in the Holy Land, are the best known.



Candlemas commemorates the ritual purification of Mary, 40 days after the birth of her son Jesus. This day also marks the ritual presentation of the baby Jesus to God in the Temple at Jerusalem.

The Gospel of Luke says that Jesus was met by Anna and Simeon. Simeon held the baby Jesus and called him a Light to the World.

Ritual purification stems back to a Jewish tradition that women were considered unclean after the birth of a child. For 40 days for a boy, and 60 days for a girl, women weren't allowed to worship in the temple. At the end of this time, women were brought to the Temple or Synagogue to be purified. After the ceremony women were allowed to take part in religious services again.

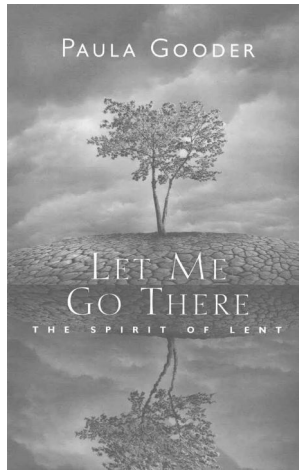
The festival is called Candlemas because this was the day that all the Church's candles for the year were blessed. On Candlemas night, many people place lighted candles in their windows at home.

Like some other Christian festivals, Candlemas draws some of its elements from Paganism. In pre-Christian times, it was the festival of light. This ancient festival marked the mid-point of winter, half way between the winter solstice (shortest day) and the spring equinox. Some people lit candles to scare away evil spirits on the dark winter nights.

Any Christmas decorations not taken down by Twelfth Night (January 5th) should be left up until Candlemas Day and then taken down.

SERVICE WITH NO NAME

On February 1st, there will be a short (around 30-45 mins) meditative type service based around the theme of Candlemas, in the Lady Chapel, and led by Christine Terry.



Let Me Go There: The Spirit of Lent

Paula Gooder continues her popular series on the seasons of the Christian year with this daily companion for the six weeks of Lent, leading readers deeper into the spirit of the season and opening up the scriptures that are read in churches during this period. She begins with an introduction to the season of Lent and its characteristic themes, exploring how to use it as a time for spiritual growth. In forty short sections suitable for daily reading, Paula then reflects on a theme associated with the season, including: - Wilderness - Journey - Fasting - Taking up your cross - Discipleship - Prayer - Temptation.

A Feast for Lent



FAST from criticism and **FEAST** on praise
FAST from self pity and **FEAST** on joy
FAST from ill temper and **FEAST** on patience
FAST from resentment and **FEAST** on contentment.
FAST from jealousy and **FEAST** on love
FAST from pride and **FEAST** on humility
FAST from selfishness and **FEAST** on service
FAST from fear and **FEAST** on faith

Ash Wednesday

As already noted, Ash Wednesday falls on the 14th February this year. As usual we will hold two services that day at 11am (said) and at 7.30pm (sung). Each will be a Communion service and each will have the opportunity for Ashing. Ashing is, as seen on previous page, an outward sign of the penitence we express as we come to God, but may also be seen as an expression of the commitment of God to us, the shape of the cross on our forehead the promised seal of God's spirit on us. All are welcome to either of these services. Ashing is offered but is not compulsory.

Promises! Promises!

For Lent this year, we will be focussing on the set readings for the Sunday Morning from the Old Testament. Each of these focuses in a different way on promises God made, to Noah, to Abraham, to God's people through Moses etc etc. There will be two groups, one the regular Reflections group which meets on a Monday afternoon 1.45-3pm and one on Thursday evening 7.30-9pm which will meet in the Lady Chapel. There will also be a booklet for the whole of Lent enabling people to do some reflecting at home. It would be good however if people did come along to one or other of the groups if possible. If you can only attend for an occasional session that is fine.

The broad outline of what we will be doing is set out below

Week beginning

18 th February	1 st of Lent	Genesis 9.8-17	God's promise to Noah
25 th February	2 nd of Lent	Genesis 17.1-7,15-16	God's Promise to Abraham
4 th March	3 rd of Lent	Exodus 20.1-17	God's promise through the law
11 th March	Mothering Sunday	Exodus 2.1-10	God's promise in a birth (and Luke 233-35)
18 th March	5 th of Lent	Jeremiah 31.31-34	God's promise of New Covenant

As we look at the Old Testament promises we will be seeking to relate them to the promises we find in the New Testament and in Jesus. We will also be looking at what that means we might do as individuals or a church community in response. Do come along if you possibly can. All are welcome whether you have ever been to something like this or not.

Priscilla



General Synod meets in London from 8th - 10th February

Among topics being discussed are;

Looking at the Appointment of Bishops

Mission and Ministry with Methodist partners

Issues in the Anglican Communion

Digital Evangelism

Valuing People with Downs Syndrome

Safeguarding

There will as always be a great deal of legislation to look at.

There is also a debate scheduled as contingency business on NHS sustainability which will be taken if a window is available.

Please pray for Synod, for good dealings with one another and for good debate and listening.

Please pray for your representatives;

Bishop David, Ven Simon Heathfield, Rev'd Canon Catherine Grylls,

Rev's Canon Priscilla White, Mr Ben Franks, Dr Rachel Jephson,

and Mr Geoffrey Shuttleworth

What the 23rd Psalm is really all about
(Here are some modern insights on a well-known psalm)

The Lord is my Shepherd - that's relationship.
 I shall not want - that's supply.
 He makes me lie down in green pastures - that's rest.
 He leads me beside the still waters - that's refreshment.
 He restores my soul - that's healing.
 He leads me in the paths of righteousness - that's guidance.
 For his name's sake - that's purpose.
 Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death - that's testing.
 I will fear no evil - that's protection.
 For You are with me - that's faithfulness.
 Your rod and your staff, they comfort me - that's discipline.
 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies - that's hope.
 You anoint my head with oil - that's consecration.
 My cup runs over - that's abundance.
 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life - that's blessing.
 And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever - that's security!

VALENTINE

For God so loVed the world,
 That HegAve
 His onLy
 BegottEn
 SoN
 That whosoever
 Believeth In Him
 Should **Not** perish,
 But have Everlasting life."

John 3:16



“Allah ma’ack” is a beautiful Arabic greeting that we often use in Lebanon and possibly elsewhere in the region, and which means “God is with you”. It is one that we use at any time of the day! To greet others, as well as to bid them farewell! And what better words to use to encourage, to comfort, to strengthen, and to cheer!

I came to appreciate these words even more when I came to faith in Jesus. Then I realized the in-depth meaning of the words “God with us”, or “Allah ma’ana” [as mentioned in the Arabic translations of the Bible]. And that “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.” [1John 4:9] So, dear friend, rejoice! Allah ma’ack this Christmas season and throughout the New Year! And as you read through our enclosed newsletter, may your prayer be that others as well may come to know the true meaning of “God with us”.

Grace and peace,

Alia

Alia Abboud

Director, Development & Partner Relations

Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development [LSESD]

Grateful Thanks

Thank you so much for the many Christmas cards I received and for all the good wishes for my recovery after my second, sudden and very unexpected operation in 2017. I regret time did not allow me a chance to send any cards myself but I was really thankful to be home in time to receive all of your lovely cards and also have a wonderful Christmas with my family. Between them they had it all organised so that I didn't have to lift a finger! I am really looking forward to seeing each and every one of you, hopefully, quite soon. Meanwhile do please, give me a phone call or even, call in and share a cuppa! For now, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the very best for this coming year, for you and your families.

Pauline Sitford

Prayer of the month



Christian baptism is one of two ordinances that Jesus instituted for the church. Just before His ascension, Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19–20). These instructions specify that the church is responsible to teach Jesus’ word, make disciples, and baptize those disciples.

Henry, my grandson will be baptised on Sunday February 11th and I offer this prayer for Henry and all people who will be baptised in the coming year! This prayer is said the day before the baptism.

Dear God,

Be with my friends tomorrow – may they know joy.

Be with my family tomorrow – may they know love.

Be with me tomorrow – may I know peace.

Be with my child – may he know your light

As he begins his amazing journey of faith.

Lead him in the right path,

Keep him safe

And help us all to know you are with us,

Now and always.

Amen

Sally Griffiths

The waiting game

Among the virtues which are said to define Britishness – like fair play and hearing people out – is the willingness to queue. There are several unwritten rules over queuing : that, if you arrive at the counter the same time as someone else that you should offer them first place and that, to jump a queue is second only to first strike nuclear warfare in a British list of unbecoming conduct. Yet scratch beneath the surface and a different mood emerges. If there are several check-outs, customers spend the time queuing, working out whether the other queues are moving more quickly – which some unnamed universal law proves they always are. You can feel the disapproval behind you if you take a nanosecond longer to pull out the right change at the counter or, through no fault of your own, the credit card won't swipe properly. As life speeds up, so do our expectations of it.

We have grown accustomed to services being delivered when we want them, and how we want them. Our choices have become more sophisticated and yet somehow more trivial. National history is replete with generations which longed for a better future: from the abolition of dangerous working conditions to the arrival of universal suffrage; from the provision of a decent wage to the creation of a safer Europe. There is little of significance we long to achieve together now, save perhaps that of winning the World Cup. This is challenging for Christians, because our faith is supposed to be filled with a sense of mission and purpose. If the surrounding culture has become bored and distracted, how can we resist a similar fate?

On February 2nd, we recall the presentation of a young Jesus in the Temple in Jerusalem. There he encountered a man, Simeon, whose sole remaining purpose in life was to see the Messiah with his own eyes before he died. Simeon had longed for this moment, investing his wait with deep spiritual passion. When the day dawned, he was ready to die.

Simeon's story helps us to think through what it means to be patient. Although he had become an old man, Simeon had a clarity of purpose and hope that was unusually striking. He knew what he was looking for, and would not be distracted from the task. By contrast, the spiritual drift in the lives of affluent Christians across Britain is a dangerous source of weakness. Do we pray much, and do we read the Bible often? I think we are called to much greater preparedness than currently on display.

Simeon's intensity was the more remarkable for being sustained. The Christian life is often said to be like a journey. Usually this is taken to mean that there are always new experiences to be had.

I think there is another dimension to it. Long journeys are often slow and frustrating, punctuated by periods of rapid progress.

Volunteer Coordinator for Christian Aid Week Collection needed

Previously we have indicated that we are unable to continue with the organisation/coordination of the Christian Aid Week Collection. We have put an article in a previous magazine asking for someone to volunteer to take on this valuable work.

We are willing to help with the initial work this year, but are unable to continue organising the event.

Having asked a number of people, without success, the church is now in danger of being unable to continue this work which has always raised a substantial sum of money for Christian Aid.

Please contact Priscilla or ourselves if you are able to take on this valuable work.

Judith and Geoff Bennett

Lent: A Time of Turning Round

Truly dust we are, and to dust we shall return;
and truly yours we are, and to you we shall return.
Help this to be a time of turning round and beginning again.
Through the forty days of Lent, help us to follow you and to find you:
in the discipline of praying and in the drudgery of caring –
in whatever we deny ourselves,
and whatever we set ourselves to learn or do.
Help us to discover you
in our loneliness and in community,
in our emptiness and our fulfilment,
in our sadness and our laughter.
Help us to find you when we ourselves are lost.
Help us to follow you on the journey to Jerusalem
to the waving palms of the people's hope,
to their rejection, to the cross and empty tomb.
Help us to perceive new growth amid the ashes of the old.
Help us, carrying your cross, to be signs of your Kingdom. Amen

Jan Sutch Pickard (A former Warden of Iona Abbey)





FROM THE REGISTERS

Holy Baptism

January 21st Edward Arthur Undery

Funeral in Church

January 26th Jackie Price

Funeral at Crematorium

January 25th Molly Atkinson

FACTS AND FIGURES

Week Beginning	Communicants	Loose Plate	Planned Giving	Gift Aid
		£	£	£
Dec 17	61	184.19	403.00	22.00
Dec 24	129	343.87	204.24	16.60
Dec 31	57	61.71	304.43	10.00
Jan 7	74	112.86	142.27	
Jan 14	45	60.80	148.15	5.00
Standing Orders			655.00	21.42
Parish Giving			1180.00	295.00

CAROL SINGING

You'll be pleased to hear that at the Carol Singing in The Court Oak pub just before Christmas - including some extra cash raised by Oliver Palmer and his carol singers going up Harborne High Street - raised £180 for the local charity Edward's Trust. That's a great amount. Well done, everyone!

You know what I mean: you get up at 3am to be in time at the airport. You actually arrive in plenty of time, check in and grab breakfast. When the plane finally reaches the runway, you've been up six hours but travelled only about 100 miles to the airport. Yet in the next six hours you will travel thousands of miles. The life of faith is strikingly similar. People can feel that nothing is happening in their life with God, and then suddenly they are whisked off their feet. I do not know why this happens, but the Christian journey is less like the measured pace of a rambler, and more like the dreaded Heathrow experience!

When you are first waiting to be called for boarding at an airport, you are keen for things to move on. After the inevitable delays, you start to lose your eagerness and begin to wander aimlessly round. This is how, having arrived with ages to spare, you still end up dashing from the counter of an overpriced duty-free shop to make the flight.

Having waited so long for just one event, Simeon could easily have missed it by taking a day off from the Temple, to wander the cosmopolitan markets of Jerusalem. But he kept his mind on the hope God had offered him. We also need to be ready when God calls us because the gate can, and does shut for the unprepared.

The other remarkable thing about Simeon was his readiness for death. Being ready to die in a cause is considered the occupation of evil fanatics today. If so, then we should reclaim it for the cause of peace. Simeon had one goal left in life: to meet the Messiah. He wasn't tearing round trying to make the most of his latter days, ticking off that Sunday supplement list of fifty things to do before you die. He had one thing left to do before he died, and it didn't unsettle him that this could happen at any moment.

Culturally, we are a long way from Simeon's contentment as we fill our lives with goods and experiences in a doomed effort to add meaning and security to our lives. To be prepared for death is one aspect of a distinctive Christian life. It would be naïve to describe this as an untroubled process, but many have proved it can be woven creatively into their own story.

Christian waiting is alert and sustained. If you've visited the optician, you'll be familiar with the way they fit a frame over you and then slot different lenses into place until they find the right one for you. It's a simple procedure to comply with, because what has been fuzzy suddenly becomes crystal clear. Many of us sit in the opticians chair so to speak, looking at the blur in front of us and say 'yeah, right, whatever' and then get up and leave. If we want to capture a vision of God moving meaningfully among us, we need to wait patiently in that optician's chair until, like Simeon, we can honestly say: 'my eyes have seen your salvation'

Peter Stokes

COVER STORY

This month's cover has been sponsored by Jean Perks. It is of St Collen's Parish Church, Llangollen.

St. Collen lived during the 7th century and he celebrated on the 21st May each year. He originally lived in Glastonbury but was not happy there. He prayed for guidance to a safe and secluded spot where he may live out his days in peace. In a dream, he was told to travel east and then north until he encountered a lone horse that he could use. He followed these instructions and he did encounter a horse that allowed him to mount it and continue his journey. He finally arrived at the place that is now called Llangollen and settled in the middle of the valley by a river. He built an hermitage and a chapel at the centre of the area that he had surveyed on horseback.

He then lived out his days peacefully, bringing faith to the community and establishing a church that remains on the original site that he chose. He was assisted by monks who followed Collen and continued his ministry.

Now, fourteen hundred years later, the community is peaceful and welcoming to travellers, especially those from far-off lands who visit each year at the International Eisteddfod. Indeed, surrounding towns and villages share in the giving of hospitality to visitors and make them welcome year after year.

The main body of the present church was built adjacent to the original church in the 13th century. However, the tower at that time was constructed of wood but it lasted until 1749 when it was declared unsafe. A replacement tower was built in stone and remains to this day. It was when the stone tower was being built that the original church, built by Collen and his monks, was demolished and the stone used in the new tower. You can see that there is still have some of the original stonework dating back to the 7th century and worked by the hands of Collen within the church today. Following on from the work completed in the late 1700's, various improvements have taken place including a major extension started in 1863 when a south aisle was added, and the church was extended eastwards to provide the chancel, the vestry and the organ chamber.

The church is a fascinating building. The peace within the building is palpable and the handiwork of many craftsmen is to be seen everywhere. The roof of the building and its carved oak ceiling is especially interesting and an inspiring feature of the church. It was installed in 1450 by expert craftsmen under the close supervision of the Abbot of Valle Crucis Abbey.

If you wish to sponsor a future magazine cover, please get in touch.

SUN 18 FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

8.00 am Holy Communion *Genesis 9.8-17; 1 Peter 3.18-end; Mark 1.9-15*

10.00 am Family Communion
Readings as at 8am

6.30 pm Evensong *Psalms 119.17-32*
Genesis 2.15-17, 3.1-7; Romans 5.12-19

Mon 19 1.45 pm Lent Reflections *143 Balden Road*

Tue 20 10.30 am Queen Mother Gardens
2.00 pm William Lench Court Service

Wed 21 10.30 am Call in for Coffee *Committee Room*
11.00 am Holy Communion *Lady Chapel*
Jonah 3; Luke 11.29-32

Thu 22 9.30 am Stay and Play *Hall*
6.30 pm Choir Practice *Church*

SUN 25 SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

8.00 am Holy Communion *Genesis 17.1-7,15-16; Romans 4.13-end; Mark 8.31-end*

10.00 am Family Communion
Readings as at 8 am

6.30 pm Evensong *Psalms 135.1-14*
Genesis 12.1-9; Hebrews 11.1-3,8-16

Mon 26 1.45 pm Lent Reflections *143 Balden Road*

Wed 28 10.30 am Call in for Coffee *Committee Room*
11.00 am Holy Communion *Lady Chapel*

Jeremiah 18.18-20; Matthew 20.17-28

Straplines

God must work in you before He can work on you and through you.

God will never become disillusioned with us because he has no illusions about us in the first place.

Having one child makes you a parent; having two makes you are a referee.

I asked God for all things that I might enjoy life; instead He gave me life so that I may enjoy all things.

The best gifts you can give: To your enemy, forgiveness; to an opponent, tolerance; to a friend, your heart; to a customer, service; to every person, love; to every child, a good example; and finally, to yourself, respect.

PROGRAMME FOR FEBRUARY

Thu	1	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		7.30 pm	Service with no name	Lady Chapel
Sat	3	10.30 am	Messy Church	Hall
SUN	4	SECOND SUNDAY BEFORE LENT		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Proverbs 8.1,22-31; Colossians 1.15-20; John 1.1-14</i>	
		10.00 am	Family Communion <i>Readings as at 8am</i>	
		6.30 pm	Evensong <i>Psalms 65</i> <i>Genesis 2.4b-end; Luke 8.22-35</i>	
Mon	5	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
Wed	7	10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>1 Kings 10.1-10; Mark 7.14-23</i>	Lady Chapel
Thu	8	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church
SUN	11	SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT		
		8.00 am	Holy Communion <i>2 Kings 2.1-12; 2 Corinthians 4.3-6; Mark 9.2-9</i>	
		10.00 am	Morning Praise with Baptism	
		6.30 pm	Sung Eucharist <i>Readings as at 8 am</i>	
Mon	12	1.45 pm	Reflections	143 Balden Road
Tue	13	6.00 pm	Wedding Rehearsal	Church
		7.15 pm	PCC Meeting	Committee Room
Wed	14	ASH WEDNESDAY		
		10.30 am	Call in for Coffee	Committee Room
		11.00 am	Holy Communion <i>Joel 2.1-2,12-17; John 8.1-11</i>	Lady Chapel
		7.30 pm	Sung Eucharist for Ash Wednesday <i>Readings as at 11 am</i>	
Thu	15	9.30 am	Stay and Play	Hall
		6.30 pm	Choir Practice	Church
Fri	16	12.30 pm	Wedding of Bobby Capper and Mykela Preston	

A more accurate New Testament

Bible scholars have claimed that they have used early Greek manuscripts to create a more accurate version of the New Testament. The new edition, which was printed in its original Greek, was published recently by researchers from Tyndale House, a bible research institute in Cambridge. Dr Dirk Jongkind, vice-principal of the institute, explained in a press release the motive behind the new publication. He said: "The scribes who copied the texts that have become our earliest known manuscripts of the New Testament were only human, and inevitably they made small mistakes. The great thing is that now we have so much evidence at our fingertips, we can study the types of errors the New Testament scribes made and come to more informed conclusions about what the text being copied would have said."

The new version took ten years to produce and the researchers have said it could pave the way for more accurate English translations. The New Testament was originally written in an early form of Greek in the first century but was translated into Latin. A new edition was published in the original Greek by Dutch Renaissance humanist Desiderius Erasmus Roterodamus in 1516, which relied on early texts. Dr Jongkind explained errors in earlier versions of the New Testament occurred for a number of reasons including when scribes included elements from Matthew's gospel while transcribing Mark's because they wrote from memory. He said, "Previous editors have allowed themselves considerable liberty in standardising spelling, making paragraph divisions, deciding punctuation and other matters. This may hide significant data about the origin and even interpretation of the Greek New Testament."

However, not be dismayed by their findings, he explained, "Christians will be relieved to know that our 10-year study of the most important manuscripts shows that while errors are part and parcel of the copying process, there is no evidence whatsoever of systematic revision of the text. So while a scribe might accidentally change 'Jesus Christ' to 'Christ Jesus', we don't encounter textual differences between the manuscripts that materially change the meaning."