

NEW LEAVES

December 2015

Greetings glorious people of St. David's
& St. Michael's!

As your new curate, Tom has kindly asked me to write these few words for our parish magazine. And I am delighted to do so.

I am a man of questions.... when I encounter someone or something new, I am curious. I ask: why? I look for meaning. I expect meaning to be found. I anticipate trusting relationships being formed by mutual interest and care. You may have noticed in your conversations with me, I am indeed a man of many questions!

I question to build up people in the reality of their relationships; I question to affirm truth in everyday encounters. This works because any answers forthcoming are never solutions or fixings. Rather, momentary answers to inspire further, deeper, more sensitive questioning, and hence greater discovery, and greatness of depth in relationship.

In Advent, the whole church embarks on a journey of questioning. Our summer certainties of Green Ordinary Time are left behind. No longer will our future look like the past. The months of Advent are preparation for something new, for someone new who is coming. We are invited by the words of the Advent readings, by the shape of the Advent liturgy, by the hymns, prayers and sermons, to ask questions about the future and into the future. To ask holy questions enabling true openness of heart, readiness to accept, and willingness to change when holy answer comes. Our searching questions will be answered with a divine boldness. For when that something new, that someone new, comes among us, we need new and bigger questions!

Jesus the Christ is that someone new who comes at Christmas, who insists on bigger questions. As Son of God and Son of Man, King of Kings born to the throne of heaven while sleeping in a cradle of poverty lined with stable straw, God has done something truly radical.

As the story of Jesus' birth unfolds after Christmas Day, we come to share our simple and sociable questioning with the shepherds who watch their flocks by night. We share our wise and wealthy questioning with the travelling Magi bearing gifts from afar. We share our obedient and fearful questioning with the mostly highly favoured Mary and Joseph.

And moreover, we will share our pompous and shameful questioning with the Pharisees and scribes. We will share our slippery and clever questioning with Pontius Pilate and the High Priests of the Temple. We will share our doubtful and ignorant questions with Jesus' own twelve chosen disciples.

In 2016 we will share a new year of asking new things of each other and of God. This is our part in the same ongoing story of God that found voice in the Lord's angels sent to Mary and Joseph: "Do not be afraid".

I am a man of questions. I believe questioning God does not break Him. Instead, I believe questioning breaks the idols of our false hope. Questioning helps us to find the sure foundation of God. Risky questioning expands the boundaries of our imagination into where God himself awaits us.

Therefore in 2016, I invite you to use questions kindly to energise your journey into God, to deepen your knowledge of how God knows you, and to enrich your loving relationships with other people. Will you entrust your questions to God described by the Exeter theologian Richard Hooker as "no captious sophister, eager to trip us up whenever we say amiss, but a courteous tutor, ready to amend what, in our weak-

ness or our ignorance, we say ill, and to make the most of what we say aright” ...?



Shalom.

Christopher Durrant, Assistant Curate

December from St Michael's

Waiting.

Expecting.

Anticipating.

Watching.

The horror of the attack in Paris is still fresh as I write; this was an event probably totally unexpected by ordinary citizens, but perhaps in the minds of watchful security agencies it was something to anticipate and prepare for. Such events are grist to the mill of the New Atheists who like nothing better than to show how dangerous religion is. It kills, they say. However, this is the very ground on which we can engage with the debate, pointing out that frequently it is the misinterpretation of genuine teaching that leads to the twisted theology fueling hatred and the desire to destroy anything that does not 'fit' with it. (Alister McGrath's book, 'Why God Won't Go Away' engages robustly in the debate about God raised by the New Atheism; it is very readable and explanations are clear. I recommend it.)

About three months ago I booked a train trip to London to visit two exhibitions at the Royal Academy in November. It seemed so long to wait; the early mornings were still light and the evenings long-ish when I made the arrangements, but eventually the day came and I caught the 06:12 to Paddington, a long and winding journey. I had been discussing the relationship of art to political debate and statement with friends, and we had come to the conclusion that even 'pretty' stuff had comments to make about the status quo. Renaissance painting and the

use of perspective all carried challenges to the usual way of thinking. Vanitas paintings, still life collections painted in the artist's studio (always including something dead, like a bird, or a symbol of resurrection like a butterfly) paintings of great social change including steam trains, even posters for forth-coming events all made the viewer think again about current events. Although I was looking forward to seeing the Ai Weiwei exhibition, I wasn't too sure about the messages that it carried. A powerful presentation of straightened metal rods taken from collapsed school buildings where over 5000 pupils and teachers had died, with the names of the victims on the walls of the gallery was just one of his installations that made a great impression on me. Years ago, the earthquakes that caused the destruction might have been noted, because the levels on the Richter scale would have made an impact on international recordings, but the human tragedy might have been suppressed. Ai Weiwei has been a great embarrassment to the Chinese government and the cause of great revelation to the West. I came out of the gallery reviewing my earlier scepticism. My expectations were exceeded and my understanding deepened. Also at the R.A. was Edmund de Waal's carefully arranged collection called 'White'. He had included the Hare with the Amber Eyes, a charming netsuke that had led him to write the book of the same name. As a complete contrast to the massive pieces that were in the Ai Weiwei galleries, here was collection in the slightly gloomy light of the Library, set amongst books and manuscripts, so that you had to look carefully at each piece, from Turner's palette (smaller than I thought it would be) to a large marble piece of two figures, a woman bathing a soldier's wounds. De Waal explained that white is more than a lack of colour: it throws all other colours, tones and shades into perspective and allows us to see both white and colour differently. He included a score of John Cage's piece '4' 33'' , to make a similar point about

silence and listening. Only in the silence can we hear everything else. Again, although I had been reading reviews about the exhibition, it was much more than I had expected. Roger Scruton referred to this concept of the value of silence this morning in his talk 'A Point of View' on Radio 4, suggesting that our young people have been done a disservice with the constant racket of noisy sounds purporting to be music, and so they find it hard to appreciate the great conversation that is music. He is looking forward to encouraging a greater listening amongst the young.

Although we talk of Advent, and separate it from Christmas itself, according to the media and the merchants, Christmas is already here. Our only expectation is in the planning: we must stock up on food and presents for those we love, (and have all sorts of things in reserve for unexpected generosity and guests) otherwise they will not enjoy Christmas at all, and it will be our fault. I overheard a conversation recently about how much someone had spent on a present for a member of the family; apparently it wasn't enough, 'so I told him' explained the narrator 'that he hadn't spent that much on my present last year, so I wasn't going to spend much on his this year.' Thank God we are not dependent on such petty accounting when we consider God's gifts to us and the paucity of our responses.

It hardly seems time to be considering Advent and Christmas, New Year and Epiphany again. The wait for the children is always endless; impatient for the excitement, they are wound up by all the advertising and preparation and flurry. The Christian season of Advent apparently takes its name from the ceremonies surrounding the accession of a Roman Emperor and the entry of a ruler to a province or a city; these events were 'advent' or 'arrival' of the great official, representing the power of Rome. Using Latin, Christians adopted this word to describe the arrival of Jesus Christ, the Saviour. Later thinking suggested two

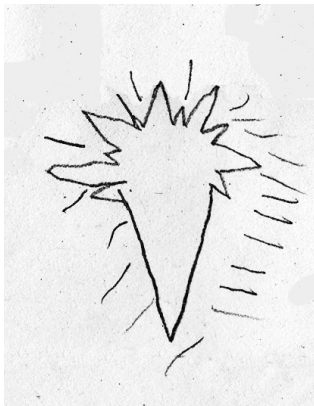
advents, one for the birth of the Messiah and a later one, when Christ will come in glory to judge the world. Advent attracted solemn practices similar to those of Lent.

So what are we waiting for? The veil between knowing and not knowing can sometimes reveal a snatch of the future, a tiny glimpse of a suggestion of the glory that will ours with Christ. We wait for that hope to be fulfilled, as we do at every Eucharist and every moment that we share as the children of God. Knowing that God is a loving Father and will not give us stones when we need bread, we continue to come to Him in our need.

Join us for our Advent Procession at 6p.m. on the Second Sunday of Advent and participate in the hope and promise of God's love.

January will bring us a Leap Year. From St Michael's, we wish you all a very blessed Christmas and much happiness in the New Year.

Stephanie Aplin



Exeter City Centre Chaplaincy

Learning from experience

The Chaplains have been visiting Exeter shops for about 18 months, and the team is now 11 strong. Between them, we have contacts in large stores, medium-sized shops, and small shops where the owner is also the person who serves the customers and stocks the shelves. We have learned a great deal about the work of shop staff, such as the need to be constantly revising the presentation of their goods, the implications of half term holidays, the work involved in the run-up to Christmas – and also their uncertainties about the future of their shop or about the hours they will be asked to work. As they become more familiar with the Chaplains, they are more willing to share these concerns. There are also personal matters about which they welcome a sympathetic listening ear from a Chaplain.

When a Chaplain visits a small shop and meets the owner on each visit, they are soon recognised and their work appreciated. However, in a large store, the same Chaplain may visit regularly and on each occasion meet different staff: then they are constantly starting from square one and explaining Chaplaincy. In these situations, it is much slower work to build up trust.

We have a fresh group of folk planning to join our training course in the New Year. At the moment we are revising the training to take into account some of the above experiences, so that the new Chaplains will be better prepared for what they are likely to meet when they start

visiting. We will incorporate examples from our work, and our current Chaplains will share their own stories. Please pray that this work will proceed with wisdom and be ready for use in January, and that the new participants will be excited by the prospect of joining the Chaplaincy team.

Pilgrimage **O**n 13th November dozens of **pilgrims set off for Paris** from St.

Martin-in-the-Fields church in London, scheduled to reach the French capital ten days later where they will be hosted by local families. Their adventures can be followed on the social media and they will join hundreds of others arriving from other countries and continents calling for deep and urgent action to mitigate against the climate chaos which is already damaging more vulnerable communities and places, and which pervasively threatens future generations.

Yet pilgrimages are much more than a few hikers walking a well-trodden path. Pilgrimages are profound political statements for they are radical expressions of counter-culture. While most of society appears to be walking blindly towards a cliff-edge, bound up in a state of stupefaction, pilgrims are taking time out from a 24/7 lifestyle to re-discover connections.

In effect, those who participate in such purposeful journeys are demonstrating three values which our consumer would ignore to its peril: rest, relationships and reward. And as they express these in action, we can note they are literally walking the talk!

Taking time out and away from busyness and stuff is to rediscover the need for a 'sabbath' (Hebrew- Shabbat) as part of human fulfilment. We all need to share in regular periods of slowing down, refraining from work and shopping, and to appreciate and celebrate the gifts of life with others. Indeed some Christian and Jewish theologians will point to the seventh day of creation in the stories from the book of Genesis as being the pinnacle of divine activity. Humanity was shaped on the sixth day, leaving the day of rest as being the culmination of God's plan!

Secondly, people use pilgrimages to rediscover relationships. The special interaction with the way they travel on – the landscape, the space, the places they encounter. They may meet new friends or reflect on older friendships and re-examine their value. Reconnection with the elements and the weather, the soil, the seasons and sustenance are all part of this rediscovery. So can be a re-assessment of one's belief or faith – one's relationship with the divine - God or the Universe or the Force of Life.

Thirdly, the majority of us seek reward in superficially materialistic terms. We look for happiness that is provided in an insatiable supply of 'goodies', consumer novelty products, fashions, tangible achievements, financial acquisition, achievable targets, and so on. However, that attitude to synthesised happiness never fulfils. There is always something else to buy or acquire or consume... The unreachable slips through our fingers and we are never satisfied.

But pilgrims have a sense of sufficiency. When we possess almost everything, we appreciate nothing. Yet living on the edge or on the way

encourages us to appreciate everything. Once we develop an acceptance of “joy in enough” we may experience a deeper sense of reward and completion. We take pleasure in who we are, and are less obsessed with what we do or that which we own.

So pilgrims and pilgrimages offer us hope in a deeper and different potential. In a society where we are told ‘there is no alternative’, they can remind us always that “another way is possible”, and if we step in the right direction we may actually find ourselves on it....

All best wishes

Martyn Goss



A Spotless Rose

Images of the Incarnation



*Renaissance and Modern
Christmas Music*

Exeter Choral

directed by Dr Nigel Browne

St Nicholas Methodist Church
Topsham EX3 0HE
Thursday 10th December, 7.30pm

St Michael & All Angels Church
Mount Dinham, Exeter EX4 4EB
Saturday 12th December, 7.30pm

Admission £8, students £5, children free (including refreshments)

www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk/event/exeter-chorale-concert-mary-queen-of-heaven/

Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity

(John Milton 1608-1674)

suggested by Jan Earle

This is the month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heaven's Eternal King
Of wedded maid and virgin mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty
Wherewith He wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain
To welcome Him to this His new abode,
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The star-led wizards haste with odours sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honour first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire
From out His secret altar touch'd with hallow'd fire.



St David's Eucharist December		
December 06 : Advent 2		
Reading 1	Malachi 3: 1-4	Catherine Matlock
Reading 2	Philippians 1: 3-11	Mary Kirkland
Gospel	Luke 3: 1-6	
Time of prayer		Geoff Crockett
Junior Church:		
December 13 : Advent 3 Confirmation Service		
Reading 1	~	
Reading 2	~	
Gospel	~	
Time of prayer		
Junior Church:		
December 20 : Advent 4 <i>Family Service</i>		
Reading 1	~	
Reading 2	~	
Gospel	~	
Time of prayer		
<i>No Junior Church</i>		
December 24 : Midnight Service		
Reading 1	Isaiah 9: 2,6,7	Lawrence Sail
Reading 2	Hebrews 1: 1-4	Gabrielle Kirby
Gospel	Luke 2: 1-20	
Time of prayer		Chris Gill
<i>No Junior Church</i>		
December 25 : Christmas Day		
Reading 1	Isaiah 9: 2,6,7	Geoff Crockett
Reading 2	Luke 2: 1-20	
Gospel		
Time of prayer		Christopher Durrant
<i>No Junior Church</i>		

St David's Eucharist		December
December 27 : St John the Evangelist		
Reading 1	Exodus 33: 7-11a	Emma White
Reading 2	1 John 1	Pam Smith
Gospel	John 21: 19b-end	
Time of prayer		David James
<i>No Junior Church</i>		



St David's Eucharist		January
January 03 : 2nd Sunday of Christmas		
Reading 1	Ecclesiasticus 24: 1-12	Cathy Knowles
Reading 2	Ephesians 1: 3-14	Richard Johnson
Gospel	John 1: 10-18	
Time of prayer		Ian Cartwright
Junior Church:		
January 10 : The Baptism of Christ		
Reading 1	Isaiah 43: 1-7	Lawrence Sail
Reading 2	Acts 8: 14-17	Stephanie Hills
Gospel	Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22	
Time of prayer		Jeanie Honey
Junior Church:		
January 17 : <i>Family Service</i>		
Reading 1	~	
Reading 2	~	
Gospel	~	
Time of prayer		
<i>No Junior Church</i>		

St David's Eucharist January

January 24 : 3rd Sunday of Epiphany

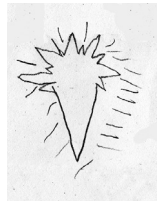
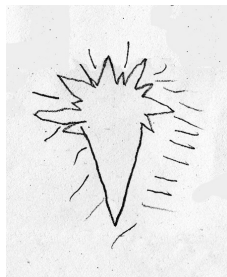
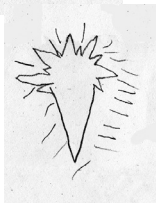
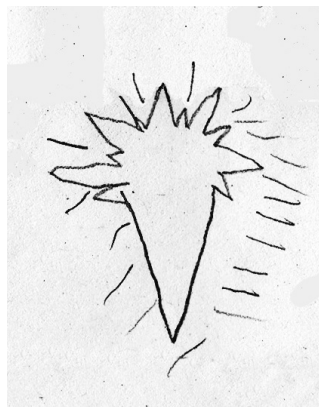
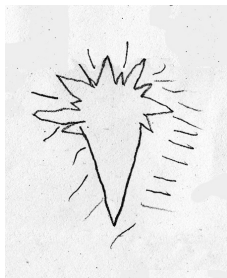
Reading 1	Nehemiah 8: 1-3, 5-6, 8-10	Sue Wilson
Reading 2	1 Corinthians 12: 12-27	Clive Wilson
Gospel	Luke 4:14-21	
Time of prayer		Bill Pattinson

Junior Church:

January 31 : 4th Sunday of Epiphany

Reading	1 Corinthians 13	Jeremy Lawford
		Paula Lawford
Gospel	Luke 2: 22-40	
Time of prayer		Nigel Walsh

Junior Church:



St Davids Womens' Group

Hello everyone

Its been some time since we have had a St Davids Womens' Group event. We are sorry but everyone in the planning group have had 'a lot on' personally and the months seemed to speed by. Anyhow, we are pleased to tell you about the following dates to put in your diaries.

Tuesday December 1st A Reflection for Advent

6.30-7.30 in The Lady Chapel.

This is an opportunity to appreciate peace and quiet and an opportunity to share time together before the rush and hurly burly of Christmas. There will be readings, silence and music.

Tuesday January 19th 2016 Our New Years Dinner

6 for 6.30 at The Pasha Turkish Restaurant in South Street.

We need to pre order the food and menus will be available for you soon so you can choose what you would like to eat. It is a family run restaurant with freshly cooked food and a good choice including vegetarian and gluten free.

Please pass these dates on to others you know who may enjoy these evenings.

Please let us know of anyone who is not on email so we can make sure we keep in touch by phone or direct contact.

Thank You

very best wishes to you all

Ann Watts Mary Kirkland Mollie Curry

Helena Walker Emma White Hilary Francis

Music & Events at St Michael's – December 2015 & January 2016

Whether you're a regular, visitor or returnee over these winter months, you are most welcome to "Come and worship" with us here at St Michael's.

No doubt the joyous, uplifting and slightly naughty, romcom film "Love Actually" will be gracing our TV screens again soon with its ensemble story of the lead up to a secular Christmas, in which most characters, but not quite all, find love one way or another.

Our sacred seasons of Advent & Christmas are also about the earthing of religion in relationships, strained or fulfilling, in the unsettling humility of God become human, one of us, at his mother's breast, the out-building behind the Inn echoing to his crying, awake in a manger.

Theology finds a long word, Incarnation, to disguise the naked fleshliness, the messy humanity of it all, as we wonder how it really was for Mary & Joseph, the Shepherds and their families, Herod and his clever advisers, the Magi with their expectations? Ideas also explored in our music over the next 2 months.

The big Gospel song at the end of the film's Nativity Play says – All I want for Christmas ... is you. We might rephrase it to – All we need for Christmas ... is Jesus. But what that actually means to each of us will be different, for we are each different. How we respond to the Christmas

story and its music this year will probably depend on how events have affected the various physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual facets of our life.

There is a strange symmetry in the life of Jesus, sometimes picked up in poems or paintings – stable cave and rock-hewn tomb, the wood of crib and cross, swaddling-bands and graveclothes, the spices of the Wise men and the Women, angelic words to the Shepherds and the Women, the cruel pragmatism of politicians and zealots.

But through it all, from start to finish of those special 30-odd years, there is Mary, uniquely Mother of God, and also representing us in our humanity.

From Advent to Candlemas, we hope that what's on offer at St Michael's and St David's will help you to delight in the Season of Incarnation, of Jesus Son of God born in humility, of Joy to the World, of Love, actually – O Come, O Come Emmanuel.]

See <http://www.stmichaelsmountdinham.org.uk/events/> for details of many of the following:-

On **Wednesdays 2nd, 9th & 16th December**, St Michael's will be open from 8.15 – 9.15am to offer Breakfast and hospitality to the parents and children of St David's School as they arrive, and to our other neighbours, the residents of Mount Dinham. If you can help with this outreach, please contact Chris Heaven (christopherheaven@live.co.uk) or Sabrina Groeschel (sabrina.groschel@eccr.org.uk).

Thursday 3rd December at 6pm, there will be a sung Requiem Mass in memory of Nick Heath.

From **Thursday 3rd to Sunday 6th December**, Crediton Parish Church have their Annual Christmas Tree Festival, a sylvan link with St Boniface – see websites for opening hours.

Sunday 6th December, Advent II, 10.45am Mass. Setting: Missa “Dixit Maria” by Hassler, and Motet “Canite Tuba” by Guerrero. (... Veni, Domine, et noli tardare. Sound the trumpet ... Come, Lord, and

do not delay.)

Our beautiful candlelit Advent Procession at St Michael's is on **Sunday 6th December** at 6pm. Prayers, Readings, Hymns and Carols illuminate the 7 "Great O" Antiphons of the Advent Hymn "O come, O come Emmanuel". The service culminates with Palestrina's double choir setting of the Magnificat, and is followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Tuesday 8th December at 6pm. CBS Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. All are welcome at this Plainsong Mass.

Saturday 12th December at 7.30pm, Exeter Chorale, conducted by Dr Nigel Browne, presents a programme of seasonal music, Renaissance and Modern, on the theme of Images of the Incarnation. Admission £8 (£5 Students, children free) including refreshments.

Sunday 13th December, at St David's Church at 9.30am, Confirmation Service with the Bishop of Crediton, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally.

Sunday 13th December, Advent III, Gaudete Sunday with Rose Red Vestments at 10.45am. Mass in E by Harold Darke and, appropriately, Rejoice in the Lord Alway.

Sunday 13th December, St Michael's Choir is at Killerton House, Broadclyst, from 2-4pm for an afternoon of Carol Singing in the Music Room. National Trust admission applies.

Please come and support us. The House has Narnia themed decorations this year.

Thursday 17th December at 7.30pm – Our traditional Service of Nine Lessons & Carols at St Michael's.

Sunday 20th December, Advent IV, 10.45am. Lighting the 4th candle and thinking of Mary, with Missa "Ave Maris Stella" by Victoria. The Motet "Prope Est Dominus" is by Michael Haydn, from this Sunday's Gradual – The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him.

Sunday 20th December, at St David's Church at 6pm – Another more contemporary Carol

Service. Why not try 18 Lessons & Carols this year?

Thursday 24th December, 11pm Carols from the West Gallery, 11.30pm, Midnight Mass. The beautifully tuneful Mass in F by Charles Wood and the ever popular 1837 arrangement of "In Dulci Jubilo" by

R L Pearsall.

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock. “Now they are all on their knees,” An elder said as we sat in a flock By the embers in hearthside ease. We pictured the meek mild creatures where They dwelt in their strawy pen, Nor did it occur to one of us there To doubt they were kneeling then. So fair a fancy few would weave In these years! Yet, I feel, If someone said on Christmas Eve, “Come; see the oxen kneel,
“In the lonely barton by yonder coomb Our childhood used to know,” I should go with him in the gloom, Hoping it might be so.

This poem, “The Oxen” by Thomas Hardy, published in The Times on Christmas Eve 1915, is exactly 100 years old. On the face of it, a bucolic idyll of worshipping animals (O magnum mysterium) and simple country folk, but just below the surface are Hardy’s own growing doubts and the irony of such a myth ‘in these years’ of war raging in the mud of the trenches. And perhaps still a lingering hope for peace on the earth, upon the midnight clear.

Friday 25th December, Christmas Day, 10.30am (N.B.) Mass in F by Harold Darke, and Motet: Born Today, by Jan Sweelinck.

Sunday 27th December, St John the Evangelist, the disciple whom Jesus loved. 10.45am Mass. Missa & Motet “O Magnum Mysterium” by Victoria.

Sunday 3rd January 2016, Christmas II, 10.45am. Mass for Four Voices by William Byrd. Motet: Lullay my Liking, by Gustav Holst. N.B. No Evensong today, but please come to...

Wednesday 6th January, Epiphany, 7.30pm. Mass in C & F by Stanford. Motet: Three Kings from Persian lands afar, by Cornelius. Please make this Event a priority in your diary. We shall be formally thanking Fr David Hastings for the gifts of his ministry among us at St Michael’s over several years, as he retires from his position as Honorary Assistant Priest. This is also the CBS Mass for January.

Sunday 10th January, Baptism of Christ, 10.45am . Mass in F by William Harris. Motet: O for a Closer Walk with God, by C V Stanford. Thereafter we go a cappella for 3 Sundays.

Sunday 17th January, Epiphany II, 10.45am Sung Mass. Missa L’Hora Passa by Viadana and O Sacrum Convivium by Croce.

Sunday 24th January, Epiphany III, 10.45am . Mass for Five Voices



and Sing Joyfully, by William Byrd.

Sunday 31st January , Epiphany IV, 10.45am. Missa “Lauda Sion” by Palestrina. Motet: If Ye Love Me, by Tallis.

We complete the Nativity narrative with the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, Candlemas, on **Tuesday 2nd February** at 7.30pm, singing the Missa Brevis “Laetatus Sum” by Dr Nigel Browne, based on Parry’s “I was Glad”, and the contemporary Motet “Lux Aurumque” by Eric Whitacre.

Looking back to early November, it was a great joy to welcome Michael Lester’s family and friends, and Br Peter Charles OPA from London. At a special Mass here, Michael took his vows, habit and the name Br Michael Jerome to become a novice of the Dominican Anglican Order of Preachers. We wish him well as he explores his vocation further.

Wishing you all the love, joy and peace that we need this Christmas and New Year.

Richard Barnes

Exeter Central Library

Exeter Central Library run several groups on a variety of topics.

Please use this link for more information

www.devon.gov.uk/index/cultureheritage/libraries/yourlocal-library/exeter_libraries/exeter_central_library/events_at_exeter_central.htm

Here are a few examples of what's on offer.

Woolly Wonders Knitting Group

Date: Every month - Tuesdays

Time: 14.00 - 15.30

Description: Knitting is being touted as “The new Yoga”. It can help to relieve stress and take your mind off your aches and pains, as well as keeping your mind active and reducing the risk of memory loss. All this and the added bonus of enjoying the company of other knitters.

Audience: Everyone welcome

Cost: Free

Bookings: Drop in - no need to book

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Exeter Audio Book Group

Date: Once a month meeting

Time: 10:00 - 11:30

Description: A new reading group for blind and visually impaired people being launched at Exeter Central Library, The Hoskins Room Castle Street. This is a chance to get together and discuss and recommend books in large print or audio format.

Audience: Blind and Visually Impaired people with or without helpers including guide dogs.

Cost: Free

Bookings: Just turn up

Organiser: Ask for Liz Cordin 01392 384 209

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IT Drop -in Sessions

Date: Every Wednesday

Time: 10:00 - 12:00

Description: We can help you with: how to set up an email account and how to open and send attachments. How to use a scanner. How to upload photos to your computer. How to find what you want on the web. How to use social housing sites. How to use Ebay. How to book things online. How to use ereaders and ebooks.

Audience: Anyone who would like help sorting out their basic computer needs.

Cost: Free

Bookings: Just drop in

Organiser: Mike Mills & James Knight 01392 384 209



PRAYING WITH THE BIBLE

1. The quiet time

The classic way of reading a passage of the Bible, perhaps using Bible reading notes (from BRF, Scripture Union, or Reflections for Daily Prayer), and then praying about the way the passage has struck you. Prayer can continue in a number of ways, e.g.

- TOP (Thanksgiving, Confession, Petition)
- A book of prayers
- Five-finger exercise:
 - index finger** (points) – for people who guide and help us
 - middle finger** (tallest) – for leaders in politics, media, church
 - ring finger** (weakest) – for those in need
 - little finger** (modest) – for ourselves
 - thumb** (strongest) – for the most important people/ things in our lives

John
Proctorward
Lishar
of
Oxford

2. Holy reading

A way of feeding and meditating on the Bible.

- **Read:** Take a passage and start to read slowly until a phrase captures your attention.
- **Reflect:** Chew the phrase carefully, drawing the goodness out of it. Repeat it, roll it around your mind, suck it slowly for its meaning.
- **Respond:** Pray about the thoughts and feelings that have emerged.
- **Rest:** You may just want to stay in silence for a while.
- **Repeat:** Carry on with the passage.

Living
faith
Series
of
leaflets

3. Ignatian meditation

A way of entering a gospel event with the senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing.

- Read the passage slowly and attentively. Put the Bible down.
- Close your eyes and re-run the story, using the senses to enter it imaginatively (see the various people, smell the sea air, listen to the voices, feel the stones underfoot...) Watch the story unfold.
- At the end, move closer in to Jesus and get into conversation with him about what has just happened. Let that conversation (prayer) go on as long as necessary.
- Reflect on what you've learned, and give thanks.

GETTING STARTED

Prayer isn't a technique; it's a relationship. It's not about trying to persuade a reluctant God to do something, or to craft a perfect set of words to win God over. It's a friendship, with many different dimensions. It starts in the most ordinary, instinctive reactions to everyday life:

- **Gratitude:** good things are always happening to us, however small.
- **Wonder:** we often see amazing things (e.g. in nature) but pass them by.
- **Need:** we bump into scores of needs every day.
- **Sorrow:** we've messed up.

Prayer is taking those instincts of gratitude, wonder, sorrow and the desire to help, and stretching them out before God. Everyone has those instincts, so prayer is making our responses intentional and focusing them towards God. We therefore need to give prayer that most scarce commodity – time. The rule here is: **Start small; Stay natural; Be honest.**

PRAYER AS RELATIONSHIP

Like all good relationships (marriage, children, close friends), our relationship with God has different elements:

'Just getting on with it': we don't need to get overly precious about the relationship; we just get on with life, secure in the knowledge that God is present and loving at all times.

Chatting: ordinary interaction through the day: arrow prayers, trigger prayers, walking prayers, practising the presence of God (see over).

Talking: as in marriage, special time is needed if a relationship is to grow.

Day by Day, quiet time, holy reading. Sometimes we may want to argue!

Intimacy: in deep relationships we get beyond words and into touch and intimacy. This is a time for the love-language of silence, symbols and sacraments.

REMEMBER:

- These different elements will vary with our temperament and the stage of our lives.
- Talking and intimacy require special times and places to be designated.
- Prayer can often seem to be an introvert activity and as so many of the population are extroverts different approaches may be needed, such as: seeing daily living as 'for God', seeing loving action as prayer because it's offered to God, prayer with prayer partners or prayer groups and 'just getting on with it' as above.

Read any good books lately?

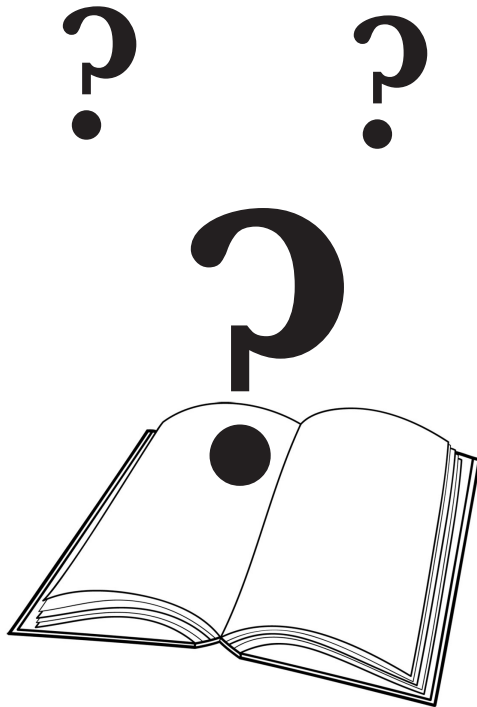
We would like to introduce a review section to our magazine and invite all you readers, film goers, music fans to write a short recommendation of something that you have seen or heard recently and really enjoyed.

It can be on any subject, not necessarily religious although we would especially welcome those.

It's just a way of sharing and enjoying things together and fostering our feelings of community.

Go on -be brave! All you need to do is to include the author, composer or performer and a short piece about it and why you enjoyed it.

Books, CDs DVDs Films.



Devon Home Library Service -
bringing books and more to people in their homes

The Devon Home Library Service works in partnership with the WRVS (Women's Royal Voluntary Service). It aims to provide library books, (including audio books on CD, and large print books) to those people in the community who through ill health or disability can no longer visit the library.

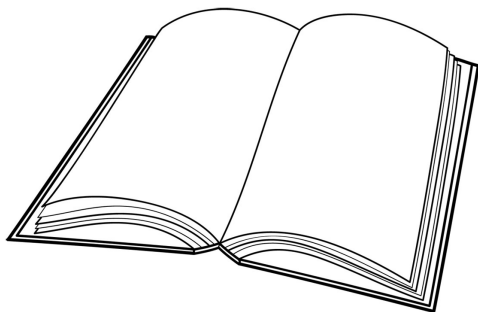
After discussing with the clients the sort of books they like, (eg romantic fiction, travel books, particular authors), WRVS volunteers choose books for their clients which they deliver to them from once a fortnight to once every six weeks, depending on the needs of the client, at a mutually convenient time. There is **no charge** for the service and there are **no fines** on books!! Clients may keep the books for as long as needed and may order books they particularly want to read.

Large print books, cassette tapes and audio CDs as well as ordinary print books are available. Some clients prefer non fiction such as biography and travel books, other prefer romantic novels or murder mysteries!

For those people who love reading or just browsing through books, but are confined to their home, this service offers a chance to have access to the library as well as a visit from a friendly face on a regular basis. Often clients and volunteers make lasting friends so there is satisfaction on both sides.

We really want to promote and extend the service to reach as many people as possible!

If you would like to use the service, or know of someone who would, please contact Julia on 01392 757725 or email crichton-smith9@hotmail.co.uk



The Soup Kitchen at St. David's

As many of you will know, Thursday evening is the time we receive a number of homeless folk at St. David's and provide soup and refreshments to sustain them through the cold nights.

They need warm clothing and shoes, so if you have fleeces, sweaters, coats, jeans, or trousers you would like to pass on, they will be gratefully received.

We also like to have paperbacks they can take to read, so if you are parting with books please think of leaving them with us.

Thank you.

Contact Mary on:- 07872626168 if you need to leave donated goods





every Wednesday
Exeter Community Centre
17 St Davids Hill
Exeter

Affordable Community Acupuncture

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pay what you feel you can afford

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Headteacher: Mrs. Anne Hood

Tel: 01392 255551 Website: www.st-sidwells-ce.devon.sch.uk



For children aged 3 to 11 years

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Breakfast and After School Clubs available

We have a long-standing tradition of high quality education
within a caring, Christian ethos.

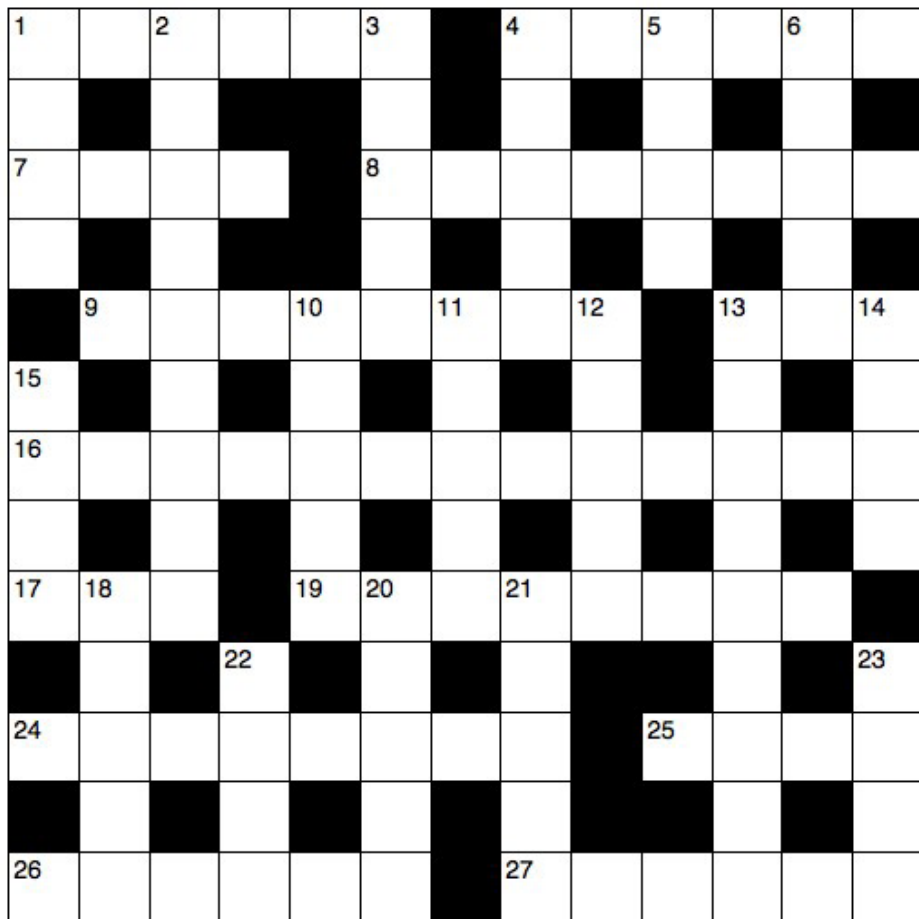
"St Sidwell's is a good school where teaching is good and pupils' achievement is high"

"An outstanding feature of the school is the care, guidance and support it gives pupils."

"The personal development of pupils is also outstanding."

"Spiritual development is excellent." "Behaviour is exemplary."

December crossword



Across:

1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)

4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)

7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)

8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)

9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)

- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down:

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to

wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)

21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22)
(5)

22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)

23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)

Answers later in the magazine

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originally published in Three Down, Nine Across, by John Capon (£6.99 BRF)*



St. David's Parent and Toddler group

If you're walking past the Parish Room on a Thursday morning around midday you may well hear several voices singing out the Okey Cokey and wonder what's going on. In fact this song has become the informal signature tune of the Toddler Group thanks to the enthusiasm of the children and their parents/carers.

The weekly session is 10:00am to midday, all year (except August and Christmas).

We charge £1 per child plus 50p for a sibling and this funds the cost of our art and craft resources, snacks, milk and Christmas party. We usually have ten to twelve children in the age range from new born up to four. There is a rota of helpers; Barbara, Freya, Julia and myself, who are all CRB checked.

As soon as they come in the children get stuck in to playing with the many toys which have been donated to us over the years. By far the most popular is the sandpit, but the children also love the mini-slide, the ride-on toys, painting on the easel and shopping for plastic fruit in the tent. There is usually a simple activity on the table such as play-dough, puzzles, drawing or glueing. We have even managed cooking on occasions.

The adults have a tea or coffee and then at about 11:00am it's snack time and the children sit down to fruit, milk and rice cakes. The fact we offer a healthy snack is an important issue for many parents.

When it's tidy up time, we wind down the play and get the children involved in clearing up. They love to join in putting the toys away in the cupboards and getting the musical instruments out ready for our nursery rhyme singing and the grand finale of the Okey Cokey.

Our thanks go to the Church for letting us use the Parish Room for the last seven years, thereby supporting what is a very necessary resource for parents of young children. Over the years we have had several parents who have made lasting friendships through the group and given each other a lot of practical and moral support in child-rearing. This can be a really good way of combatting the sense of isolation that some parents of toddlers may experience, especially, for example when people are new to the area, if they don't have family living nearby or their partners have come to work/study at the university for short periods of time. Toddler groups are also a great way of introducing young children to some of the activities that they will encounter in pre-school.

Toddlers is great fun for children and a nice break for adults. The St. David's group is (so we are told by current parents) one of the friendliest in Exeter. If you know anyone with pre-school children or grandchildren, then please do recommend us.

They are welcome to pop in any Thursday.

Contact:

toddlers@stdavidschurhexeter.or
or ring Julia on 07729 068 567

Sam Wellbelove



Dates of Note

December 1 Eloi **- a patron saint for the euro?**

It's nearly 13 years since Europe switched over to the Euro. (January 2002) So this is a good time to remember Eloi, bishop of Noyon, who was born in Gaul, and started out as a goldsmith. He entered the service of Bobon, the royal treasurer. He went on to become master of the mint for King Clotaire 1 of France. His reputation was based not only on excellent design, but also on economical use of materials. Not a bad example for the makers of the Euro!

Eloi's craftsmanship and friendship with the king made him very wealthy. He gave much of his money to the poor, built a number of churches, ransomed slaves, and founded a convent in Paris and a monastery in Solignac.

December 3 Francis Xavier **- the seasick missionary**

Ignatius Loyala sent his friend and follower Francis Xavier (born 1506) to the Orient as a missionary. What a missionary! Imagine David Livingstone, Billy Graham and the Alpha Courses rolled into one. His mass conversions became legendary – he baptised 10,000 people in one month and in just ten years of work was credited with 700,000 conversions.

Xavier became the most famous Jesuit missionary of all time, working so hard that he had only a few hours' sleep each night. He was known as 'the Apostle of the Indies' and 'the apostle of Japan'. He began by reforming Goa, which contained numerous Portuguese Catholics, notorious for cruelty to their slaves, open concubinage, and neglect of the poor. For three years, by example, preaching and writing verses on Christian truths set to popular tunes, Francis did much to offset this betrayal of Christ by bad Christians.

For the next seven years he worked among the Paravas in southern India, in Ceylon, Malacca, the Molucca islands, and the Malay peninsula. He met with immense success among the low-caste but with almost none among the Brahmins.

In 1549 he ventured on to Japan, translated an abridged statement of Christian belief, and made a hundred converts in one year at Kagoshima alone. When he left Japan, the total number of Japanese Christians was about 2,000; within 60 years they were resisting fierce persecution, even to death.

Wherever Xavier sailed, he left after him numerous organised Christian communities. Not bad for a man who suffered seasickness and had trouble in learning foreign languages!

Xavier died in 1551, on his way to China. His body was preserved and enshrined for many years. His right arm was detached in 1615 and is still preserved in the church of the Gesu at Rome. He was canonised by Gregory XV in 1622, and declared Patron of the Foreign Missions by Pius XI in 1927.

December 6 St Nicholas

– patron saint of children

Father Christmas seems to be as old as Europe. Once he was Woden, lashing his reindeer through the darkness of northern midwinter. Then he encountered the Church, and She transformed him into a saint, the much-loved Nicholas, Bishop of Myra (in south-west Turkey) in the fourth century. St Nicholas became the patron saint of children, and was given 6 December as his day.

Since the 6th century St Nicholas has been venerated in both East and West, though virtually nothing is known of his life. Some believe he may have been one of the fathers at the Council of Nicea (325), imprisoned during the Emperor Diocletian's persecution.

According to legend, Nicholas was an extremely generous man. He revived three schoolboys murdered by an innkeeper in a tub of pickles. He rescued three young women from prostitution by giving their poverty-stricken father three bags of gold. (Hence the use of three gold balls as the pawnbroker's signs.)

Over the centuries many, including children, sailors, unmarried girls, pawnbrokers and moneylenders have claimed him as their patron.

Perhaps it was on account of St Nicholas' generosity that in recent centuries children began to write little notes sometime before 6th December, to tell him about the toys they specially wanted. These notes were then left on the windowsill at night - or else on a ledge in the chimney.

But St Nicholas Day chanced to lie in the magnetic field of a much more potent festival.... and after awhile his activities were moved towards Christmas. Then in Bavaria the children still left their notes on the windowsill, but they addressed them to Liebes Christkind - Krishkinkle as they knew him - and the saint's part in the matter was simply to deliver the letters in heaven.

The most popular result of the cult of St Nicholas has been the institution of Santa Claus. He is based on Nicholas' patronage of children and the custom in the Low Countries of giving presents on his feast. Santa Claus has reached his zenith in America, where the Dutch Protestants of New Amsterdam (New York) united to it Nordic folklore legends of a magician who both punished naughty children and rewarded good ones with presents.



December 7

Lazarus of Bethany – back from the tomb

Some people have near-death experiences.... Lazarus should be their patron saint. Except that he went all the way, and died for four days. He was quiet in his tomb and the mourners of Bethany were in full swing - before Jesus called him back to life. (See John 11: 1 – 44.)

What happened next to Lazarus and his sisters Martha and Mary? The New Testament never tells us, but there are some clues from early church history and legends.

It seems that Lazarus became very popular with the early Christian Church because he was living evidence that Jesus could bring people back from the dead. It also seems that Lazarus was NOT popular with the local Jews, for the very same reason. They wanted to forget Jesus, and here Lazarus was still walking around, talking about resurrection...

So eventually some exasperated Jews decided to act. According to an early Eastern tradition, they placed Lazarus and his sisters into a leaky boat and set them adrift in the Mediterranean.... where the little boat carried them safely to Cyprus. Here Lazarus became bishop and lived for another 30 years.

Another, later, tradition has it that the boat had no rudder or oars, but still bore them safely to Gaul, where Lazarus founded a church and became the first bishop of Marseilles, so to speak... until he was martyred under Domitian (81-96AD).

Either way, second time round, Lazarus stayed dead. But it was thought he was still at work. By the late Middle Ages, anyone who had a vision of the after-life knew just whom to thank for this ‘postcard from heaven’ – St Lazarus!

December 21 Winter Solstice

A Midwinter festival has been a part of life since pre-Christian times. When the hours of daylight are fewest, the warmth of the sun weakest, and life itself seemingly at a standstill, our ancestors, the pagan peoples of Europe and Western Asia, kept festival by lighting bonfires and decorating their buildings with evergreens.

Perhaps they believed that the dying sun could be enheartened by fire, and the life of the buried seed assured by the presence of evergreen branches.

With the advent of Christianity, the Spring gods became identified with Christ, and the birthday of the sun with the birthday of the Light of the World.

The early church father Tertullian did not approve of Christmas decorations. “Let those who have no light in themselves light candles!... You are the light of the world, you are the tree ever green....” But by the time of St Gregory and St Augustine, four centuries later, this had changed. Pope Gregory instructed Augustine not to worry about harmless outward customs, as long as the right God be worshipped through

them. And so many Anglo-Saxon customs were never discarded, but simply endowed with a new significance.

By 1598 one John Stow of London wrote how: “Against the feast of Christmas, every man’s house, as also their parish churches, were decked with holme, ivie, bayes, and whatsoever the season of the yeare afforded to be greene.”

25 Christmas: The story of the Christingle

The word ‘Christingle’ actually means ‘Christ Light’, and celebrates the light of Jesus coming into the world. Stories of how the Christingle began look back to the Moravian Church, which is found in the Czech Republic. The Moravians have held Christingle services for more than 200 years, and according to them, this is how the first Christingle might have been made:

Many years ago the children in a village were asked to bring a Christmas gift to put beside the crib in the church. One family was very poor, and had no money for gifts, but the three children were still determined to take something. The only nice thing they had was an orange, so they decided to give the Christ-child that.

But then they discovered the top was going green, so the eldest cut it out, and put a candle in the hole. To add some colour, one of the girls took a red ribbon from her hair and tied it around the middle of the orange. It was hard to make the ribbon stay still, so they fastened it in

place with toothpicks. The toothpicks looked a bit bare, so the youngest child added some raisons to them.

The children took their decorated orange lantern to the church for the Christmas Mass. The other children sneered at their meagre gift, but the priest seized upon it with joy. He held it up as an example of the true understanding of the meaning of Christmas, for the following reasons: the orange is round, like the world; the candle gives us light in the dark, like the love of God; the red ribbon goes round the 'world', as a symbol of Christ's blood, given for everyone; the four sticks point in all directions, and symbolise that God is over all: North, South, East and West; and the fruit and nuts remind us of God's blessings.

The Children's Society first introduced the Christingle Service to The Church of England in 1968, and it has since become a popular event in the church calendar. This candlelit celebration is an ideal way to share the key messages of the Christian faith, while helping to raise vital funds to help vulnerable children across the country. Visit: www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Christmas: Where did stockings come from?

No one is really sure, but a story is told of St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4th century, who may have started the custom by accident. St Nicholas was of a wealthy family, and of a generous heart. As Christmas approached one year, he wanted to help a poor family whom he knew, but he did not want them to know it was him. So he climbed

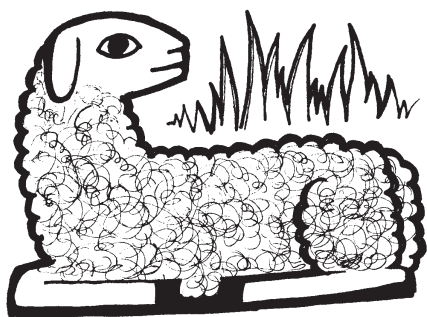
up on their roof on Christmas Eve and dropped some coins down the chimney.

The next morning the coins, to the great surprise of the family, were found in the stockings of the ladies, who had hung them to dry by the fire the night before. Every year after that they put their stockings out, in the hope that some more money would fall into them. They told the story of this amazing appearance to their friends and neighbours, and the custom caught on.

Christmas Mistletoe's smelly history

Did you know that the word 'mistletoe' means dung on a tree? The Anglo-saxons thought that mistletoe grew in trees where birds had left their droppings. Mistel means dung, and tan means twig.





HOLLY

We sing about the ‘Holly and the Ivy’ and prickly green leaves and red berries are everywhere in Christmas decorations.

In Scandinavian countries the holly is even known as the ‘Christ-thorn’ and it seems that the name of the holly actually came from the word ‘holy’.

The holly reminds us of the death of Jesus – the sharp prickles on the leaves are like the crown on thorns that Jesus was forced to wear on the cross.

The red berries remind us of the drops of blood that came where the thorns hurt his head.

Holly is an evergreen, which

means that it does not lose its leaves in the autumn, but keeps them all year round. And because its leaves are always green it is a symbol of eternal life.

SHARP PRESENTS

A quick way to make little presents for all your class and friends.

You will need nice pencils, glue (spray glue is best) and Christmas wrapping paper with a small pattern on it. Choose round pencils rather than the hexagonal type.

Cut a strip of wrapping paper wide enough to wrap around the pencil and as long as the pencil. Put glue on the back of the paper and wrap it around the pencil. When the glue has dried; trim away any excess paper with small scissors.



What do elves sing to Santa?

Freeze a Jolly Good Fellow!

Barbara's Edible Stall

Please keep bringing and buying.

We need you!

NEXT DATE:

SUNDAY 20th DECEMBER

Jane Woodman



Crossword solutions

December answers

ACROSS: 1, Depend. 4, Canopy. 7, Beak. 8, Irritate. 9, Zedekiah. 13, Ate. 16, Job's comforter. 17, NAE. 19, Lang Syne. 24, Blockade. 25, Five. 26, Enigma. 27, Drench.

DOWN: 1, Debt. 2, Peaceable. 3, Drink. 4, Curia. 5, Nuts. 6, Put it. 10, Excel. 11, Is man. 12, Hoofs. 13, Attention. 14, Ezra. 15, Ijon. 18, Aslan. 20, Abana. 21, Greed. 22, GCMG. 23, Leah.

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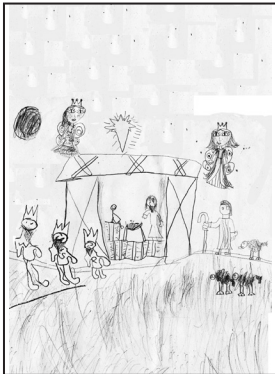
The deadline for inclusion of articles for the February issue of New Leaves is Sunday January 10th 2016

Any information and articles you'd like to submit for inclusion in future issues should be sent to Ashley and Johanne via St David's Church or our email: thedairy@btclick.com

If you have images of any events of interest to the Parish community please send them to us.

Please send digital files via email if at all possible and please make the subject header fit the content of the email - thanks!

Thank you to Graham Lerwill for organising the printing of this magazine - his hard work is much appreciated.



Front cover and inside illustrations

by Childrens' Church members:

Ted

Charlie

Adah

Sabrina

thanks to them and the Childrens' Church leaders

**Happy Christmas
and a
Merry New Year to All!**