



The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



June 2017

The church magazine for St Mary the Virgin, Sixpenny Handley with Gussage St Andrew and St Rumbold's, Pentridge

Who's who?

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John Cullingford 516 453

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The Mothers' Union in South Sudan

In August 2016, Mothers' Union representatives visited the Sudan for the first time in 6 years. Mama Reida, the MU Community Development Coordinators (CDC's) in Khartoum greeted them on their first morning, "We thought you'd never come again" was a phrase mentioned regularly.

To give this some context, it is important to remember that Sudan is the country with the 8th worst persecution of Christians in the world. When Sudan and South Sudan split, Sudan was declared a Muslim State without any Christians. It was only under protestations from the Church that they agreed that Christians form 1% of the population.

Against this incredibly difficult backdrop, the Mothers' Union Literacy and Financial Education Programmes are making an enormous difference, and have done so for the last 16 years! Where women have had no hope or opportunities to work, they are now starting businesses and sending their children to school. They have the opportunity to save their small salaries together and be encouraged, even when they can't get to Church.

Samira is the elected Mothers' Union leader in the Diocese of Khartoum. She became literate in 2003, through a Mothers' Union literacy circle. Samira said that before she felt like she was blind, "it's like my world has opened up". Since then, she has improved her language skills with her husband's help and enrolled herself into a local Bible School, where she achieved her diploma. She now volunteers with Mothers' Union and is an articulate female leader. Alongside this she is running her own small business, which helps support her family.

Church leaders in the area say, "Since the literacy programme started a lot has been achieved, you can see many literate women in our communities and the Savings and Credits programme has enabled many women to become self-reliant, even contributing at Church. When we hold meetings, the women now participate, they have confidence and they are really becoming strong. When we conduct home visits, their lives look very different. In the past, their homes were sparse, and some even didn't have a roof and were dilapidated. Now, they have beautiful homes that they have restored and created for themselves." **From the MU website.**

You can follow this up

The people of South Sudan and elsewhere need our support – please have a look at the MU, ChristianAid and Stop the Traffic websites for ways we can help. The MU is the only voice many women in Africa have, and it makes a real difference in many people's lives.

Fetes and Sessions – see you there!

Come along to the famous Pentridge Fete, on the village green on Saturday 10th June from 1pm. And catch up with the church refreshments at the Big Session, in Sixpenny Handley on Saturday 8th July from noon.

Mothers' UNION
Christian care for families



News items and articles welcome!

Please drop them in to the Vicarage, or email; ask@handleychurch.org.uk

Thanks!

FROM THE REGISTERS



The Christening took place of Samuel Pittard and Finlay Hall

In full colour

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



No Chancel Tax here!

If you are buying or selling a house in Sixpenny Handley, remember that you do not have to pay for a search for Chancel Tax. This was an historic tax that might have been due from property built on land that was once owned by the church. This tax is out of date and cancelled. If you need written proof to go with your documents, please contact the church office.

Dear friends... I WAS A STRANGER AND YOU INVITED ME IN

There is more to say about the refugee crisis than can be covered in a few lines, but here are some facts and statistics about the Syrian crisis.

The United Kingdom has a long history of welcoming refugees. For example, in the 16th century 50,000 Huguenots were received from France to escape persecution. There are currently an estimated 117,000 refugees living in the UK, which is 0.18% of the total population. Our government has pledged to accept 20,000 more refugees from the Syrian civil war by 2020. Nearly 40,000 asylum applications have been made already, although it looks like the government may go back on its promise. Since the war began in 2011 a total of 11 million Syrians have been on the run, and 4.8 million have been forced to find safety in other countries. More than 50% of these refugees are children.

What is the difference between an *asylum seeker* and a *refugee*? Very simply, an asylum seeker seeks to prove to the authorities that they would be at risk if they returned home. Their status changes to refugee once this has been determined. These terms are not to be confused with a *migrant*, someone who has entered another country (legally or not) for personal gain, work or otherwise. It is difficult to prove the strict criteria to be classified as a refugee, and only about 45% of applications have been granted in recent years.

For many, the journey fleeing homes and crossing borders and seas is treacherous. The UNCHR (United Nations Commissioner for Refugees) say that some 10,000 Syrians – men, women and children – have died as they attempted to cross the Mediterranean.

You may wonder what life is like for the lucky ones who make it to our shores. A senior immigration advisor from the Intentional Care Network, Rev James Davies, says ‘a hostile environment has been created for them.’ He explains that the red tape is so complicated that he knows of cases where it would be easier for parents to divorce and then remarry later,

because the partner who needs to seek approval to stay in this country has more chance of being accepted if they are a single parent.

You would hope that those who have finally been accepted would be able to breathe easily. Certainly a new life has presented itself, with new opportunities. Yet, can you imagine the culture shock? Nor, as we have discovered, is it easy for communities to accept and support these new people. Increasingly across Europe we have seen negative and sometimes violent reactions to refugees. Germany in particular is experiencing difficulty with culture clashes.

Yet we can all do something to help. The Christian response is clear. Faith-based groups have already been mobilizing in communities across the country. Mothers’ Union, The Children’s Society, Home for Good, as well as many other partners and mission agencies, have been launching small community projects and trialing national programmes. Some of them are aimed at helping refugees, especially families, learn about their new communities and others are aimed at the communities themselves to help welcome those in need.

Some details of how you can get involved are available on www.mothersunion.org The Home Office has a website dedicated to this issue at www.gov.uk/helprefugees. We need to recognize this major issue – it is not going to go away.

‘We often move people from war into poverty’ **Sabir Zazai**, Centre Director at Coventry’s Refugee and Migrant Centre, who himself arrived in the UK as a refugee from Afghanistan in 1999.

‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me’

Matthew 25:35-36

Adapted from an article in the Mothers’ Union Magazine, Families First

TWO WAYS...

The **Rt Revd Dr Edward Condry, Bishop of Ramsbury** writes;

I drove to Sunday morning church recently in a thick winter mist. I had to scrape the ice off the windscreen just to leave the house. The familiar route was changed. The trees hung in the light. Two deer ran ahead of me on the road. There are, it has always seemed to me, two ways of experiencing being a Christian. There are those, who are perhaps very fortunate, who seem to sense God's presence and the inspiration of His Spirit very easily and naturally. There are others, and I am one, who find that we simply cannot summon up God, like Aladdin rubbing his lamp and the genie appears.

This is absolutely not the same as saying that I don't believe. It's just that I don't experience God at all times in all places. So I am one of those for whom faith is a search.

This is not the same as doubt, although for some people it may well be. I'm not talking theory here. I'm talking about experience: what it feels like to be a regular Christian. Someone who goes to church pretty regularly. It can feel like driving through the mist.

The point for me is nevertheless to expect God. The aim is to put myself, if you like, in His way. That's what I am doing when I pray. I don't necessarily experience God every time I close my eyes and put my hands together. But I do hope. I do expect.

It's a continual, persistent, and all-important question. It's like the poet Edwin Muir's meditation on Good Friday:

Did a God
indeed in dying
cross my life that day
by chance, he on his road
and I on mine?

Praying for Renewal

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have invited all Christians to join a global wave of prayer. From Ascension to Pentecost, Thy Kingdom Come will bring Christians of all traditions together to pray for the renewal and revival of the Church, and for Christ to be made known.

Gerry Lynch, Diocesan Thy Kingdom Come Co-ordinator said, *"Taking part doesn't necessarily mean having a big, fancy, event. Why not encourage people at your church to commit to saying the Lord's Prayer at home every morning, or have regular home groups focus meetings around the Lord's Prayer during the period? There are lots of other ideas and resources for ideas big and small online at www.thykingdomcome.global"*



Scene 4 of the
Easter Story.
Holy Week,
St Mary's

Prayer Time

It is so easy to get caught up with the trappings of wealth in this life. Grant, O Lord, that I may be free from greed and selfishness. Remind me that the best things in life are free. Love, laughter, caring and sharing.

I remind myself that I am in the presence of the Lord. I will take refuge in His loving heart. He is my strength in times of weakness. He is my comforter in times of sorrow.

Remembering that I am still in God's presence, I imagine Jesus himself standing or sitting beside me, and say whatever is on my mind, whatever is in my heart, speaking as one friend to another.

www.sacredspace.ie

A Prayer for Justice

Strengthen us, O God, to relieve the oppressed, to hear the groans of poor prisoners, to reform the abuses of all professions; that many be made not poor to make a few rich; for Jesus Christ's sake.

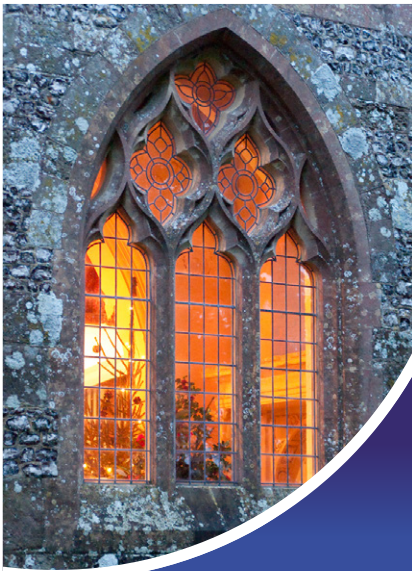
Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

Praying with Depression

I cannot pray; the past is too painful for praise, the future is too frightening for hope. I am frozen in the present - black, unending. *My precious child, how you feel now will pass, and though you cannot discern it, my love tenderly surrounds you. I will not let you go.*

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, Lord our God. How sweet are your words to the taste, sweeter than honey to the mouth. How precious are your commands for our life, more than the finest gold in our hands. How marvellous is your will for the world, Unending is your love for the nations. Our voices shall sing of your promises and our lips declare your praise. Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Blessed be God for ever.



+ Bible Study Group

As we hope you see from *The Seeker*, the Bible is THE Book! Read it and understand more in good company on alternate Thursdays at 7.15pm. Details from Mike on 01725 552 720.

Come and meet friends

▼ **Drop into St Mary's** – on most Saturday afternoons from 2.30pm during British Summer Time for a cup of tea and a chat with someone trained to listen.

* **Drop into...** the Post Office Coffee Shop on the first Monday of the month from about 11 o'clock for a coffee and chat with the vicar or curate.

T Teddy Bears
Pre-school children and their carers are invited to St Mary's on Thursday mornings during school term from 10.30am to noon, for fun, drinks and biscuits and maybe a Bible story or two. There is no charge.

☪ **Men's Group** – A beer and a chat to finish off the month at 7.30pm. Details from David Lockyer (552 492).

☪ **Mothers' Union** – Tea, company and a good talk, usually every second Thursday of the month, from 2.30pm. Details from Mary (552 041).

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary's Sixpenny Handley		St Rumbold's Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew
	9.30am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am
June 4 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	HC	#
June 11 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
June 18 th	Fathers' Day HC	Evensong	MP	#
June 25 th	Informal	Evensong	#	MP
July 2 nd	Holy Communion	Evensong	HC	#
July 9 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
July 16 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	MP	#
July 23 rd	Informal	HC	#	MP
July 30 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	MP	#

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

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

Fathers' Day

Come along to St Mary's on June 18th as we are celebrate Fathers' Day, beginning at 9.30am. It is a bit like Mothers' Day, but different! Come along if you are a father or not - after all, we can all show fathering love as well as mothering love. Stay on afterwards for a cup of coffee and a cake!

Saturday Afternoons

Don't forget our Saturday afternoon drop-ins at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley. If you are passing – or would like to have a chat with someone trained to listen – pop in for a cup of tea from 2.30pm (weddings permitting) This is in addition to the drop-in in the Post Office café on the first Wednesday of the month, when Mel or Paul will be available to talk about anything at all, which continues throughout the year.

See side panel for key to symbols

June						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 +	2	3 ▼
4	5 *	6	7	8 T ☪	9	10
11	12	13	14 HC	15 T +	16	17 ▼
18	19	20	21	22 T	23	24
25	26	27	28	29 T ☪	30	

Sat 10th 1.00pm to 5.00pm – Pentridge Fete

See website for updates

July						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 ▼
2	3 *	4	5	6 T +	7	8
9	10	11	12 HC	13 T ☪	14	15 ▼
16	17	18	19	20 T +	21	22 ▼
23	24	25	26	27 ☪	28	29 ▼
30	31					

Sat 8th from Noon – The Big Session, St Mary's with refreshments
Thur 13th – First School Praise Assembly joins the Teddy Bear's