

The Seeker

December

2009

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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Need a
lift to
Church?



Please ring Paul Skinner on 01725 552785 and we should be able to arrange transport.

The Vicar Writes



Dear Friends

Why is it always snowing in the adverts on telly at this time of year?

Every year a newspaper or television programme tries to debunk the Christmas story. In fact they are debunking what they think is the Christmas story rather than what is actually in the Bible. Read Matthew and Luke's Gospels for what really happened. You may be surprised!

The real Christmas Myth is the one you see in newspapers and on television commercials night after night, presenting the happy picture of doting parents and satisfied children enjoying a completely stress-free celebration. The real family life that is at the heart of the real Christmas story is radically different.

Mary is a teenage mum, pregnant outside marriage. She is almost abandoned and then wonderfully supported by her husband-to-be. About to give birth, they are forced to travel great distances to conform to the tax regulations of an occupying foreign power. There is nowhere for the child to be born, so Mary ends up giving birth in a cowshed at the back of a pub. There was no midwife. No gas and air. No clean sheets. No epidural.

The Christmas story we find in the Bible is much closer to most people's lives than the cosy families in the commercials. Real people struggle with enormous challenges and support each other through enormous difficulties.

It is odd that the Christmas story is all about God coming to earth to show us how to live, to show us what being human should really look like, yet so often we respond by spending too much money, running up yet more debts and eating far more than is good for us.

Yet we usually put a star or an angel on top of the Christmas tree, even in the homes of people who aren't planning any visits to church or who aren't reading this letter. And the star and the angel take us right back to the heart of the story and the strange announcement to Mary that she will bear God's son, a new star offering the world a different path to follow.

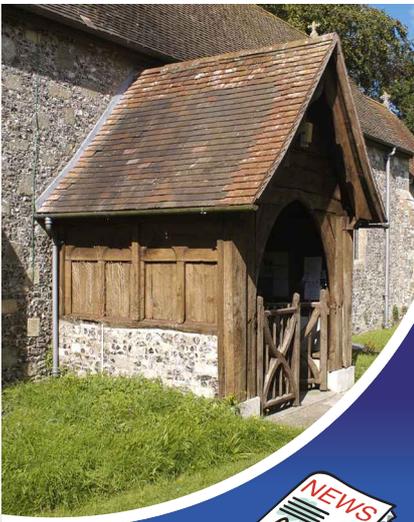
So this year, rather than pretending to be like those impossible people we see on TV, perhaps we should just think about how we can show our families, with all their oddities, frustrations, challenges and delights that we love them. Perhaps we should decide that we love them! Give them your love - as God gave his - as the best Christmas present ever.

I have based this month's letter on a lovely little book called 'Do Nothing, Christmas is Coming' by Stephen Cottrell. It is a great Advent read.

Christmas is often the time when families get together, but also often the time when they fall apart. So think through what members of your family are facing, and pour some goodwill onto them. Pray for them. Share with them.

Have a wonderful, real Christmas - Your Friend and Vicar, Mel

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

Any other news to the Vicarage, please.

FROM THE REGISTERS



The funeral of Selina Adams took place on Thursday 17th September.

The blessing of the marriage of Kerry and Austin Raishbrook took place on 26th September at St Mary's.

The funeral of Peggy Jones took place on Wednesday 30th September at St Mary's.

The funeral of Kathleen Penny took place on 7th October at St Mary's.

The baptism of Lila Gordon took place on Sunday 11th October at St Mary's.

The funeral of Pat Mullins took place on 15th October.

The funeral of Betty Hunt took place on 3rd November.

The funeral of Tony Holden took place on 18th November at St Mary's.

PENTRIDGE and WOODYATES NEWS

Funeral of Rose Peach

The family of Rose Peach - Jack, Susan, Robin, Jane and Luke would like to thank everyone who sent cards and messages of sympathy and thank all those who came to Roses' funeral in September. They would also like to thank Sixpenny Handley surgery for their help and support, Paul for conducting the service, Tim for his lovely tribute and Richard for helping them through this sad time. Over £350 was collected at the service and donated to St Rumbold's church.

Pentridge Harvest Festival

The church was beautifully decorated with flowers and produce for the Harvest Festival on 18th October. The church was almost full and afterwards everyone enjoyed cider, cheese and lovely homemade harvest bread in the autumn sunshine – many thanks to all those who contributed.

Pentridge Carols

There will be Festive Carols in the Barn at East Woodyates on Saturday 19th December 5–7pm and the Christmas Carol service will be held in St Rumbold's on Monday 21st December at 6pm.

Paul Skinner

Many of you will know Paul Skinner. Paul has felt God's hand on his shoulder all his life. Now he is to be made a priest. Everyone is invited to Paul's ordination in Salisbury Cathedral on Tuesday 1st December at 5.30pm. Come along and support Paul on this amazing day in his life. Paul will stay with us in Handley, Gussage and Pentridge, and we all look forward to calling him 'curate.'

Songs of Praise

On the last Sunday in January come along to another popular Songs of Praise at St Mary's. Please suggest any favourite hymns, old or new, you might like to sing – and if you can tell us why they are favourites, all the better. There will be warming refreshments at 5 o'clock and a good sing at 6 o'clock. We have decided to hold them on the last Sunday when there are five Sundays in the month, so look in your diaries and make a note of future good sings!

Confirmation

'I've been Christened, is that the same as being Baptised?'

'Does being Confirmed mean that I can take Communion?'

'What does being a Christian actually mean?'



We all want the best for our children, and often this means having them Christened in church. Promises are made on their behalf, and we hope and pray that one day our children will take on these promises for themselves. Or maybe you are just wondering what life is all about. We have several members of our church being confirmed on Saturday 9th January at 6.30pm in Salisbury Cathedral. Please come along and support them, and think about your own journey of faith.

YPF (Young People's Fun) – activities planned for 2010

A huge thank you to everyone who filled in and returned their questionnaires about our children and young people's activities at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley. It seems that lots of you enjoy craft, games and singing at the King of Kings Kids' Club and that lots of you might be interested in coming along to a film showing (probably on a weekend) with Harry Potter, Narnia or Lord of the Rings. Since the replies came in, someone has even suggested watching Dr Who! Look out for more activities starting later on next year, particularly for older children.



Permission to start work

We have now received permission to carry out the first stage of our plans and are almost ready to begin our improvements to St

Mary's. We shall restore and move the font from its present position in the tower (where it was moved by our Victorian forbears) to a better position and create a good social area around it. We can then lower the floor in the base of the tower and use the space for a toilet cubicle and extra storage behind smart opaque glass doors. We aim to start this work after Christmas, and then think about improving the welcome area, the sound and lighting, and the kitchen area. We believe this will make the church an even greater resource for the village.

We still need to do a lot of fund raising for this exciting project, so if you would like to know more or contribute in any way please talk to the vicar or church wardens.



Sheila's Quilt

Help us fulfill her wish and raise £2,000 for a new heating system at St Mary's

- Tickets £1 each
- Prize draw – Easter 2010

Sheila always said the welcome was warm but the building was cold. And so Sheila Smith and two friends began making a quilt as a prize to raise money for a new heating system at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley. Eventually Sheila's ill-health and her battle against cancer prevented any further work taking place.

On Sheila's death in 2008 her husband, Graham, passed the quilt to her mother-in-law. The quilt is now finished and will be given as the prize for a draw to be held at Easter 2010. Sheila's dearest wish was for a new heating system in St Mary's. Please support Graham's mission to raise £2,000 to help fulfil this dream. The quilt will be on display at the Christmas Fayre.



Christmas fun

Saturday December 5th
10.00am–12.30pm

King of Kings Kids' Club

Join us at St Mary's Sixpenny Handley (arrival 9.45am) A chance to have some fun, play games and, as we look forward to Christmas, make a Jesse Tree for Advent. All children are welcome, under-fives please bring an adult. With mince pies for the parents at 12.30. Let us know you can come – phone Maureen Lockyer on 01725 552492

Love in a Gift Box

Have you finished all your Christmas shopping? Christmas starts sometime around October nowadays, and it doesn't really finish until April 5th of the following year, when we realise just how much we spent!

Giving and receiving presents is a wonderful part of the Christmas. And we know that the tradition of giving presents at Christmas started with the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus, but there are many other examples of present giving in the Bible as well.

Mark tells us that *'a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume... she broke the jar and poured the perfume on Jesus'* head. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another *"Why this waste of perfume? It could have been sold... and the money given to the poor."* And they rebuked her harshly. *"Leave her alone,"* said Jesus... *"She has done a beautiful thing... She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. I tell you... wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."* (Mark 14:3-9).

Joseph of Arimathea brought a hundred pounds of ointment to embalm Jesus after he was dead, and not a word of praise is spoken about it in all Scripture. The woman brought just one pound of ointment and poured it on him while he was still living, and Jesus praised her and pointed out two things:

- 1) 'She did what she could.'

Acts of kindness are usually not about doing great things, but about doing small things with great love.

- 2) 'What she has done will also be told, in memory of her.'

What will you be remembered for – a life of service or a life of self-centredness?

Giving gifts should be about wanting good for the other person. If you want good for someone, tell them. Go out of your way to fill their lives with joy while there is still time. Those expressions of appreciation and love, those words of forgiveness, that special gift you've had in mind, give it while you can. Don't keep your love in a box.

The problem is that so often we spend money we can't afford on presents nobody really wants. So how about showing someone you love them by NOT spending money? Make them a jar of marmalade or a box of sweets. Run them a hot bath. Give them a present that will help someone else - Christian Aid has a great range of presents, from goats to cans of worms, from school desks to latrines. Give the student going to university a stack of envelopes and stamps. Whatever you do, tell them and show them you love them. Don't keep you love in a box.

The Wise Men brought Jesus gifts in a box. With gold for kingship, frankincense for worship and myrrh for death, they were gifts that pointed to where the story would lead. The authorities tried to put Jesus himself in a box on Good



Friday, when he challenged their way of living. But the love of God cannot be contained. It is with us today; Immanuel, God with Us. Be generous. Love a lot. Give yourself.

Mel Durrant



Bible Study

As we hope you see from The Seeker, the Bible is THE Book! Read it and understand more in good company on a Thursday evening once a month. Phone Heather (01725 552308) for details.

Midweek Holy Communion

Join us on the first Wednesday of each month for a gentle service in St Mary's, on 2nd December and 6th January at 11.30pm, followed by coffee.

Come and meet friends

Soup Lunches – Good soup and company on the third Wednesday of the month in the Vicarage. Come along from 12.30 for a great meal for only £2 on December 16th and January 20th. Profits go to the Trussell Trust in Salisbury, which helps people in desperate need here and abroad.

Fellowship Group – Meeting every Tuesday for chat, laughter and biscuits, some talk around serious themes and sometimes a steak supper or a Chinese takeaway! Phone Paul Skinner (01725 552785).

Men's Group – A beer and a chat usually on the last Thursday of the month. Phone David Lockyer (01725 552492)

Mothers' Union – Tea, company and a good talk, usually on the second Thursday afternoon of the month, from 2.45pm. Phone Jean (01725 552692) or Mary (01725 552041) for details.

Join us for Christmas and the New Year

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary the Virgin Sixpenny Handley		St Rumbold's Pentridge		Gussage St Andrew
	9.30am	☕	11.00am	6.00pm	11.15am
Dec 6th	HC		Informal	Evensong	HC
Dec 13th	MP	Coffee (10.30am)	Informal	HC	HC
Dec 20th	HC		Informal	Carols	MP
Dec 27th	HC		#	#	#
Jan 3rd	HC		Informal	#	HC
Jan 10th	MP		Informal	HC	HC
Jan 17th	HC		Informal	Evensong	MP
Jan 24th	MP		Inf & HC	HC	HC
Jan 31st	HC		Informal	SofP	MP

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



For unto us a child is born!

We wish you a joyful Christmas and we hope that you will join us at some of the events listed here.



Sat 28th November	2.00pm	Christmas Fayre, Sixpenny Handley Village Hall
Sun 6th December	2.00pm	Scouts Christmas Celebration, St Mary's
Fri 18th December	9.30am	School Christmas Assembly, St Mary's
	6.00pm	Carol Service, Gussage St Andrew
Sat 19th December	5.00pm	Carols in the Barn, The Barn, East Woodyates
Sun 20th December	6.00pm	Carol Service at St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
Mon 21st December	6.00pm	Carol Service, St Rumbold's, Pentridge
Tue 22nd December		Carol Singing around Sixpenny Handley
Wed 23rd December		Carol Singing around Sixpenny Handley
Thur 24th Christmas Eve	5.00pm	Christingle St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley
	11.30pm	Midnight Communion, St Mary's
Fri 25th Christmas Day	9.30am	Family Communion, St Mary's
	11.15am	Holy Communion, St Rumbold's, Pentridge

December 2009

See website for updates

Tues 1st	5.30pm	Ordination of Paul Skinner at Salisbury Cathedral
Wed 2nd	11.30am	Holy Communion, St Mary's
Sat 5th	9.45am	King of Kids' Club, Sixpenny Handley
Tues 8th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Thurs 10th	2.45pm	Mothers Union
Wed 16th	12.30pm	Soup Lunches at the Vicarage
Fri 18th	9.30am	School Praise Assembly, St Mary's
Sat 19th	5.00pm	Carols in the Barn, Woodyates



January 2010

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Tues 5th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Wed 6th	11.30am	Holy Communion, St Mary's
Thurs 7th	2.45pm	Mothers' Union
Sat 9th	6.30pm	Confirmation in the Cathedral
Tues 12th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Wed 13th	7.30pm	Handley PCC Meeting, Vicarage
Tues 19th	9.30am	LPA meeting, Vicarage
	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Wed 20th	12.30pm	Soup Lunches at the Vicarage
Tues 26th	7.30pm	Fellowship Group
Thurs 28th	7.30pm	Men's Group



always a warm welcome...