



The Seeker

handleychurch.org.uk



Feb 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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From the Bishop of Salisbury

In an age with so much trouble and uncertainty in the world, we can celebrate God's small miracle that is the Diocese of Salisbury, in which we give thanks for a Christian presence in every community: **446** parishes with **574** places of worship alongside **91** Fresh Expressions of church.

732 clergy, including parish priests, chaplains in schools, hospitals, prisons and other settings, and clergy with Permission to Officiate,

804 Churchwardens, **1,116** Licensed Lay Ministers, Lay Worship Leaders and Lay Pastoral Assistants, **195** Church of England Schools and Academies with **41,000** students, and **626** Foundation Governors.

And thousands of people committed to follow the way of Jesus Christ.

In 2015 there were: **34,900** are on the Electoral Roll, there were **2,700** baptisms, **550** confirmations, **1,250** weddings and **75,000** worshipped at Christmas. *Adapted from Bishop Nicholas' Christmas message.*

Lent

Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, which falls on March 1st this year. After Shrove Tuesday, Pancake Day, it is time to start preparing for Easter. Unfashionable words like *repentance* and *reconciliation* are at the heart of Lent. It is about preparing ourselves, giving ourselves a spiritual spring clean. As part of this, you might think about coming along to the Lent Course, or exploring some form of daily prayer, if you don't have one already. It might also mean more practical service, or the offering of previously unused gifts – and part of that may even (dare I say it) include contributing financially to the projects we have going on in St Mary's, St Andrew's and St Rumbold's.

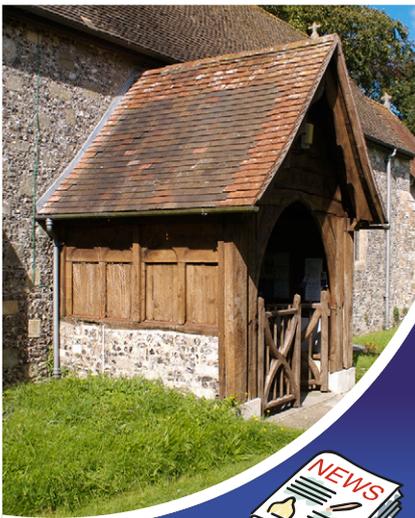
Lent prepares us for Easter, and only Easter makes sense of life and death. Lent reminds us that we do not earn our place in heaven: Jesus has already done that. And we do not earn God's love, because love cannot be earned. All we can do is respond to the love that is already there.

The Lent Course and Soup Lunches

This year we are running our Lent Course on Thursdays, for five sessions beginning on March 9th. It is called 'Food for Thought' and looks at the readings from the Bible we use in church on the Sunday before, and extending them into our lives today – particularly in terms of the food we eat! Come along to see if we really 'are what we eat' and find out more, meet friends and explore what Lent and Easter are all about.

In previous years we have also run Soup Lunches during Lent – this year we are running them after Easter, beginning on Wednesday 26th April, in St Mary's, Sixpenny Handley. Look out for more details in the next Downsman.





News items and articles welcome!

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

Thanks!

FROM THE REGISTERS



The baptism took place of
Isla Emelia Weldon
Harry Alan Raishbrook
Ivy Rose Murphy
Kelly Murphy
Isla Rose May Alborough

The funerals took place of
James Weeks
Ruth Pettis

Remember!

If you would like to give your child a good start in life, talk to the vicar about a christening.

If you are getting married, you can get married in your local church if you live in the parish or have some other link.

And if a loved one dies, please talk to us about how the church may be able to help.

Contact the vicar for more information.

We are here for you.

Dear friends...

Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are camping out on Dartmoor. Sometime during the night, Holmes wakes Watson and says, "Watson, look up. What do you see?"

Watson looks up at the sky and says, "I see the vast mysteries of the universe. I see the future written in the stars, possibilities we can only dream of. I see worlds beyond our own comprehension, I see limitless possibilities."

Holmes looks at Watson sighs and says, "No, Watson, someone has stolen our tent!"

Do you like a good mystery story – Sherlock Holmes or Agatha Christie? Part of the fun is trying to spot the clues and solve the mystery before the end. I read the other day there is going to be a remake of 'Murder on the Orient Express'. The trouble with that is we all know who did it! Perhaps we can just enjoy the puzzle, knowing the answer already...

The life of faith can be rather like a detective story. There are clues and hints all around us – in the world, in other people, in the Bible. And we have the choice of trying to discover the answer before the end, or allowing the mystery to play itself out and just enjoying that for what it is...

There are red herrings, of course. People and ideas try to mislead us, but a chap called Søren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher and poet, said: 'Life is a mystery to be lived, not a problem to be solved.' He was less concerned with reasoning and proof than that each one of us should discover God's will for our own life and live it. Don't worry over the details that can never be proved, he meant, get on and *live*. Because if everything is in God's hands, it will be all right in the end. Which means it is all right (sometimes) not to know the answer. We might even be able to enjoy the mystery!

I am not saying there is no need to try. God gave us brains to think, people to ask, books to read, intelligence to use

and truth to seek. As we move from Christmas, through Lent to Easter, I hope we can all enjoy the mystery – the beauty that is around us, in the world and in other people. And we can all seek the truth as we follow the story of Christ from crib to cross, from stable to tomb, from incarnation to resurrection. There is a symmetry and logic to the story of the Bible that amazes me every time. Every Christmas and every Easter I am blown away by the way *God turns up*. I hope you enjoy the longer days and the return to life of spring.

Your friend and Vicar, Mel



Lee Abbey is a beautiful house and community, with its own wood, cliff and beach on the rugged north Devon coastline. Visitors often comment that God is felt to be very near. There are lots of things for different ages to do, and there is no pressure to attend any of the events. It is also a lot of fun.

We are planning a trip over the weekend of 25-26th June. Two nights full board in this beautiful place with activities, teaching and worship (and *lots* of food!) is from £136 per person. Please have a look at the brochure, the website or talk to Margaret Durrant if you are interested in coming – but hurry, places are very limited!

Lent and Easter Flowers

Our churches are simply decorated through Lent. Then, between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, they are filled with colour and life as we celebrate the best news ever – the Resurrection.

If you would like to contribute to the Easter flowers, you will find a collecting box in the church, or you can leave a donation (suitably marked) in the wall safe by the door.



The Resurrection and Marriage

Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. (Luke 20:27-38)

Why do we make things complicated and difficult? If we stop and consider what Jesus says, it is really quite simple. He just focuses on *Love the Lord your God and love your neighbour as yourself*. Pretty clear and straightforward isn't it? But those who lived with Jesus at the time also found it all a struggle to get their heads (and hearts) around his message.

Luke perhaps more than any of the other gospel writers was someone who set things out in a logical order with a clear purpose. He wants us to understand how the whole story of God fits together, and how in Jesus the long held promises within the Bible are fulfilled. If you read the whole of Chapter 20 there is a series of stories that come together into one common message.

Jesus is in Jerusalem and is starting to get noticed: He is a challenge to the leaders of the time. Throughout the chapter we see different people testing out what Jesus is saying. They either don't want to trust his message or they are struggling to understand it. We can see the conflict that will end on the cross on Good Friday.

The Sadducees were the only group within the Jewish faith that didn't believe in resurrection. They also tended to be among the leading priestly families and their approach to scripture was very conservative. The Pharisees, on the other hand, embraced the idea. It was important to them because, in days when worldly justice did not come, they could be rewarded when they were raised from the dead at the end of time. Resurrection seen this way was tied to how one lived, the justice for a life lived according to the Law.

The Sadducees' question to Jesus was intended to show why resurrection couldn't happen: It was common practice that if a widow was left without a son she was married to her husband's brother. Surely, the Sadducees said, this would create a right old muddle in heaven!!

Jesus response shows us a different perspective. He is not saying we shouldn't live good lives, but rather that the old perceptions of life beyond death are not what God is about. Jesus makes it clear that there *is* life after our time on earth, but we will need to wait to find out what exactly it is like – but that poor widow need not worry, it will not be bound by earthly laws and regulations. Men and women are equal in the eyes of God, and we shouldn't be distracted by things that don't matter. Rather we should focus on our relationship with God.

Of course we should study scripture and think deeply about our faith. But we shouldn't try to second-guess the mystery of God. Rather, it is through our relationship with Jesus that we come to understand more – and that includes more about life and death. There will no doubt be things we will never grasp – well, not this side of heaven!

Remember, *God picked you out as his from the very start. Think of it: included in God's original plan of salvation by the bond of faith in the living truth. This is the life of the Spirit he invited you to through the Message we delivered, in which you get in on the glory of our Master, Jesus Christ. So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. (2 Thess 2:1-5)*

Jackie Molnar

For Ash Wednesday and Lent

O Lord, the house of my soul is narrow;
enlarge it that you may enter in.
It is ruinous, O repair it!
It displeases Your sight. I confess it, I know.
But who shall cleanse it, to whom shall I cry but to you?
Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord,
and spare Your servant from strange sins.
St. Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430)

O Lord and Master of my life,
give me not the spirit of laziness,
despair, lust of power, and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of sobriety,
humility, patience and love to Thy servant.
Yea, O Lord and King,
grant me to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen
St. Ephraim the Syrian (AD 305-373)

Almighty and everlasting God,
you hate nothing you have made
and forgive the sins of all who are penitent:
Create and make in us new and contrite hearts,
that we, worthily lamenting our sins
and acknowledging our wretchedness,
may obtain of you, the God of all mercy,
perfect remission and forgiveness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen. *1979 Book of Common Prayer*

Shining Light in the Present

There are many people and places needing our support and prayers. Here is just one, a prayer from a Tearfund partner in Jordan delivering winter kits and trauma care to Syrian refugees.

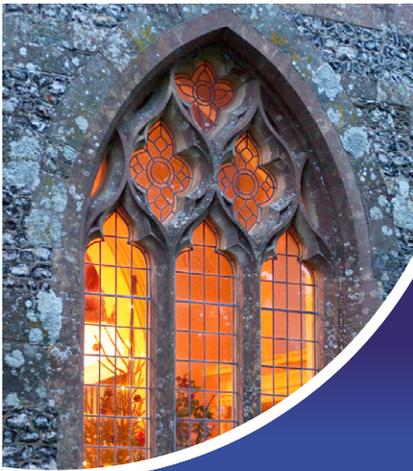
Oh Lord of hosts,
We pray for the inner healing of Syrian refugees dwelling among us – asking you, Father, to meet their daily needs. Strengthen our ministry and help us to be the 'repairers of broken walls', as Isaiah said.
Lord, let it be our hearts' desire to express your heart towards our Syrian brothers and sisters: providing food for the hungry, water for the thirsty, room for the stranger, clothing for the naked, and a visit for those sick and in prison. Amen.

As Sure as Eggs is Chocolate

It is not long before we will be buying Easter Eggs – crème eggs have been in Styles since before Christmas!

Please remember to look out for the Fairtrade or Rainforest Alliance logos on the chocolate you buy, to make sure no child labour was used in the production of the food we buy. And don't forget the Real Easter Egg, fairly traded and with the only egg to tell the Easter story, produced by the Meaningful Chocolate Company.





+ 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

L Church Lunch

Join us at Hanlega’s, at the campsite, on the first Sunday of the month at 1pm for Sunday lunch – Everyone is welcome.

*** 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.

+ Lent Course

7:30pm at St Mary’s. Meet friends and explore what Lent and Easter are all about.

☪ 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).

Join us this Sunday

SUNDAY SERVICES	St Mary’s Sixpenny Handley		St Rumbold’s Pentridge	Gussage St Andrew
	9.30am	6.00pm	11.15am	9.30am
Feb 5 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	HC	#
Feb 12 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
Feb 19 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	MP	#
Feb 26 th	Informal	HC	#	HC
March 5 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	HC	#
March 12 th	Informal	Evensong	#	HC
March 19 th	Holy Communion	Evensong	MP	#
March 26 th	Mothering Sunday	HC	#	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.

The New Service Pattern

The new pattern in our churches is settling in. The biggest change is at Sixpenny Handley, where the morning service is always at 9.30, alternating between Holy Communion and the Informal Service. Details are on the noticeboard. There is a children’s group as part of the Informal Service (during term time) and there are books, worksheets and colouring in the children’s corner during the Communion Service. The service is always followed by coffee and biscuits, so come along and get Sunday off to a good start with friends. Services in our other churches remain at the same times.

Ash Wednesday March 6th

Holy Communion and Ashing 6.00pm, St Mary’s



Make a Mothers’ Day – March 26th

Join us for our annual (and very special) service on Mothering Sunday on 26th March at 9.30 at St Mary’s. We can all show mothering love, and this is something to celebrate together as well as in our families.

February

See side panel for key to symbols

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

Thu 9th 2.45pm Mothers’ Union – Vic Hatton talking about the CCF

March

See website for updates

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

Thu 9th 2.45pm Mothers’ Union – Easter cards