

Church Newsround – January 2011

BISHOP'S LETTER My Last Article of Faith

If there was a competition for the corniest joke, I think it would be about the man who got accidentally shot in the backside during a pheasant shoot, and the notice on the hospital website said that he was doing well – “and there will be another bullet in later”.

Bulletins have featured very prominently during my time in this Diocese. Every month I have written an article for the Diocesan Bulletin, and I am always glad to see that it finds its way into lots of parish magazines.

The subject-matter has ranged far and wide – from pieces about the da Vinci Code, J. John's “Just Ten” Mission and the Abolition (and persistence!) of slavery; to reflections on prayer, pews and the Christian beliefs of Alfred Lord Tennyson. Education has featured prominently, and so have public affairs with the environment, globalisation and the Big Society jostling with tilts at Richard Dawkins, winterval and other sad symptoms of our so-called secular society. Mike Parker's **Map Addict** got a mention (why settle for a two-dimensional world when with God there is always a further dimension to explore?), and so did the film **Chocolat** which provided a new slant on the observance of Lent. By no means least, we celebrated the steady rise in the number of people being Ordained in the Diocese, the advent of New Era and the cycle of seasons and celebrations which mark out the Church's year.

But above all, I have tried to write about God in Christ and why faith, inspired by the Holy Spirit, matters more and more in a world increasingly obsessed by its own self-sufficiency. Free-range faith rather than factory-farm religion is what motivates me as a pastor, preacher and evangelist. It is this which undergirds what I have written month by month. You are free to change because, as I have repeated so often, God loves you as you are – and loves you too much to leave you that way. That is for me the key message of Christianity, and I simply leave it with you as my last letter and, for me at least, there will not be another Bulletin later!

May God continue to establish, strengthen and settle you in the faith;

and the Blessing of God Almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,

be upon you and remain with you always. Amen.

+ John

From the Registers

Baptism *Welcome to the Church*

Maisie Grace Asman 28th November 2010

Freddie Jacob Buckberry 28th November 2010

Big Thank You

Thank you to all our Magazine deliverers and Magazine helpers for their sterling work throughout the year. Keep up the good work.

If any one would like to be put on the list to become a deliverer when a vacancy arises or for when holidays happen, please contact the Editor.

Thank you. - Ed.

Another Chance

We have now come to the end of our 10th year of trading, which is very much a wonderful achievement. Some of the people helping to run the shop week after week have been involved for the whole of that time and along with all volunteers I thank them for their efforts. During this time over £13000 has been given to various causes and soon we will be looking again at how we distribute profits made over the past year. If you have any charities you would like to be considered please inform the staff at shop with relevant details.

One disappointment recently received is an increased cost put on us by the landlords. In September I was informed that the insurance on the building was being passed on to us, this for 3 months was just under £60, so for a full year could be in the region of £240. The rent previously had been very generous to us of £100 + VAT, so this is increasing our outlay to over £340.

Please continue to support the shop, this gives a lift to the helpers if they see support for the venture and money being raised for good causes. RTB

St Wilfrid's Church Finance.

After another busy year I would like to thank everyone for the support given to St Wilfrid's. You have done this in many different ways, from regular giving through the collection plate, standing orders from your bank account, fund raising events and filling Jam Jars with your change which over the past 12 months has raised over £1000. We ask that you continue to support the church as during the next few months as we will have our quinquennial inspection on the building which is always a worrying time seeing what repairs we have to deal with. After the Annual Church Council I will give more details of how the money given/raised has been used, also when we receive details of the inspection details will be given. RTB

Easter Eggs that mention Easter & Jesus.

In a moment of madness I ordered 24 Fair Trade Easter Eggs that have an Easter theme. To help me consume them I need 23 helpers. The eggs should arrive before Easter and will cost about a fiver each. All proceeds go to St Wilfs. So please let me know if you want one and I will put you on the list.

Google "THE REAL EASTER EGG" for more details. Thanks. Ed.

Dunston St Peter's School.

As I write this, we have reached the end of term and the children have started their Christmas holiday. It has been an exciting term, even without mentioning the snow!

On December 10th the School Council held a non-uniform day to raise money for a new play shed. They raised £80. We held our annual Carol Service in St. Peter's Church and the highlight was the Class 1 Nativity. In the seven years that I have been at Dunston School, I have never seen the church so full. It was wonderful.

On December 14th a group of ladies from the church came into school to make table decorations with the children. The pupils all enjoyed themselves and proudly took home their splendid decorations that night. The next day the whole school, including all of the staff, went to the Theatre Royal to see Aladdin. Cannon and Ball are a wonderful double act and it is to be recommended!

On December 16th we held our Christmas Faye after school. This included a very popular Santa's Grotto. It was a very enjoyable evening and over £300 was raised. May I take this opportunity to wish everyone a wonderful Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Graham Boyall

Headteacher

Dunston St. Peter's Church of England Primary School

SERVICES FOR JANUARY IN THE THREE PARISHES

Sunday 2nd	The Second Sunday of Christmas
8.00am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am	United service – St. Wilfrid's
Thursday 6th	(and each Thursday) The Epiphany
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
Sunday 9th	The Baptism of Christ (The first Sunday of Epiphany)
9.00am	Holy Communion – St Oswald's
9.00am	Morning Worship – St. Peter's
10.30am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
Sunday 16th	The Second Sunday of Epiphany
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am	Morning Worship – St. Wilfrid's

Sunday 23rd **The Third Sunday of Epiphany**
9.00am Morning Prayer followed by Holy Communion –
St. Oswald's

Thursday 27th **Christingle Service**
2.15pm Family Service with St. Peter's School

Sunday 30th **The Fourth Sunday of Epiphany Group Service**
10.30am Holy Communion - St. Wilfrid's

February
Sunday 6th **The Fifth Sunday Before Lent**
8.00am Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
9.00am Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am United Service – Metheringham Methodist Chapel

WI Report: December 2010

Our Christmas social started in a very traditional manner when, at Audrey's request, we all stood and sang 'Jerusalem', accompanied by Jane Foster on the keyboard. After this rousing start, the President and secretary went through the business matters very quickly, so that we could begin the important part of the evening – the food! The serving tables were groaning under the weight of all the delectable things, both sweet and savoury, brought by the members to share with everyone.

Once we had eaten our fill and consumed several cups of tea, we cleared the tables away and formed 2 circles. We then proceeded to pass the parcel (one per circle, courtesy of Moira) and finished with a selection of carols, again beautifully accompanied by Jane.

No Christmas event would be complete without a visit from Father Christmas, so our President picked up 2 bulging sacks of presents and distributed them to everyone.

We all had a very enjoyable evening, and our thanks must go to our President, Audrey Webb, and all her committee for their efforts in making this, and all the other evenings, such a success.

We next meet at Martin Manor golf club for our New Year's dinner on January 19th 2011.

PEH

6 January - Epiphany

On 6 January we celebrate Epiphany - the visit of the wise men to the baby Jesus. But who were these wise men? No one knows for sure. Matthew calls them 'Magi', and that was the name of an ancient caste of a priestly kind from Persia. It wasn't until the third century that they were they called kings - by a church father, Tertullian. Another church father, Origin, assumed there were three - to correspond with the gifts given. Later Christian interpretation came to understand gold as a symbol of wisdom and wealth, incense as a symbol of worship and sacrifice, and myrrh as a symbol of healing - and even embalming. Certainly Jesus challenged and set aright the way in which the world handled all three of these things. Since the eighth century, the magi have had the names Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior. PP

25 January - The Conversion of St Paul

January is a month of the beginning of great things! As well as the naming of the Son of God, we celebrate the conversion of the greatest ever apostle of the Christian faith. Many books have been written on Paul, and here is the briefest of introductions.

He was a Jew, born as 'Saul' at Tarsus, and brought up by the rabbi Gamaliel as a Pharisee. A devout, fanatical Jew, Saul persecuted the Christians, and watched with satisfaction the first Christian martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen. Then on his way to Damascus Saul had a vision of Christ that stopped him, literally, in his tracks. He realised that this Jesus whom he was persecuting was in fact the Messiah for whom he had longed.

Saul changed overnight. He took a new name, Paul, and became an evangelist for the cause of Christ. He became a leader in the early Church, and his special calling was as an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote many epistles to the young churches he founded - and thus, inadvertently, wrote a great part of the New Testament.

Life as the greatest apostle was hardly full of perks: he was stoned, beaten, mobbed, homeless, hated, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero in AD 64, and buried where the basilica of St Paul 'outside the walls' now stands. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many millions of people down the centuries. PP

Angela Merici (1474 – 1540)

With international concern about the welfare of children, Angela is a good saint to remember as the year gets underway. Not only did she herself survive a harsh childhood, but she went on to dedicate her own life to helping children in need.

Angela was born near Lake Garda, in Desenzano, where she was orphaned as a young child. The 1480s were hardly an easy time for orphaned girls, but somehow Angela survived to grow into her teens, when she became a Franciscan tertiary. However miserable her own childhood, Angela chose to let it work for good in her life: she decided to devote her own life to the education of poor girls. Girls! This was a time when most of the men were illiterate! But Angela was an audacious woman, and she had only just begun. She and some close companions set to work in the name of Christ, seeking out the poor families in their community. Angela taught the young girls all that she could, and prayed with them, assuring them that even they were precious in the eyes of their Creator.

All of which left the Roman Catholic Church badly baffled. What should they do with religious sisters who had taken no vows, still wore their lay clothes, and who, instead of walling themselves up in some nunnery to lead an enclosed life, spent their days in a decidedly mobile, highly visible fashion – out and about in community support?

It wasn't until 1565, some 25 years AFTER Angela's death, that the Church decided it approved of such work. By then the Ursuline nuns, as they were by then called, were going from strength to strength. They still flourish today, with some 2400 Ursuline Sisters in 27 provinces on six continents, and have been well described as 'the oldest and most considerable teaching order of women in the RC Church.'

It took nearly 300 years, but in 1807 the Roman Catholic Church decided that Angela, unveiled, unenclosed and unsupervised as she had been, had been a saint after all – and 'made' her one. PP

2011 — the 400TH birthday of the King James Bible

This year is the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, and it will be a year of celebration! Look out for Biblefresh, an initiative made up of more than 100 Christian organisations, from churches and agencies to colleges and festivals. Biblefresh one big aim: to encourage churches across the UK to a greater confidence and appetite for the Word of God.

For many people the Bible is already a vital part of life. It regularly informs and shapes their lives, their attitudes and actions. But for many others the Bible is something they struggle to engage with. So often it ends up being put to one side, ignored, unopened. They don't see its relevance; they don't see its value; frankly, they don't see the point.

Biblefresh wants to change all that. It wants to encourage all of us to engage afresh with the Bible. By bringing together so many different organisations that are involved in one way or another with resourcing Bible reading, study, translation and exploring the Bible through the creative arts, Biblefresh is opening up a wealth of resources and opportunities for every one of us.

Just imagine what might happen if we all take this seriously and make 2011 a year of the Bible in our churches and in our own lives!

So how can churches, individuals get involved? Biblefresh has come up with four pledges.

These are to:

Read the Bible

Be trained in handling the Bible well

Give to translate the Bible in Burkina Faso

Provide the opportunity for people to experience the Bible in new and creative ways

The Biblefresh website (www.biblefresh.com) provides a wealth of creative ideas and suggestions as to how you could explore all four areas further. Think about what you could do to help make Biblefresh a part of your church's year in 2011.

The BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) has created a Year of the Bible Resource pack containing samples of its Bible reading notes, posters and much more. (ready early Feb). If you would like to use this in your church, contact BRF on 01865 319700.

Whether it's to read the Bible in a year, or to read a commentary, or to help organise an event in your church—why not resolve to do at least one thing in 2011 related to Biblefresh? PP

In search of a New Year's Resolution?

As well as your New Year diet, here is another resolution for the year ahead. Everyone has heard of it – but who do you know that has really tried it? It is found in the Sermon on the Mount, and is one of the most famous things that Jesus ever said. It is also without parallel in all the teachings of the world.

Several religions urge followers to refrain from harming others. That is a first step towards building a just society. But only Jesus said that we should live our lives actively seeking to do good to others. It is an attitude warm with generosity, with kindness, brimming with quiet graciousness and compassion. We are to go out of our way to encourage the depressed, to forgive those who have harmed us, to help those in need.

To refrain from doing injustice takes strong self-control. To live caring for others takes something more – a life-attitude of self-sacrificial love. Such love we see first in Jesus, in his death for our sins on the cross. When we follow him, our Heavenly Father wants to see his Son's characteristics grow in our lives. If we are his children, he expects a family likeness! So – here is a challenge for 2011: 'In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.' The alternative is not an option! PP

Recipe of the month - white chocolate, lemon and raspberry muffins

This year (2011) the well-known Christian conference centre, The Hayes, at Swanwick in Derbyshire, celebrates its centenary. This is one of its recipes.
(Probably one of the reasons my late father liked going to Swanwick. - Ed)

White chocolate, lemon and raspberry muffins

These muffins are very quick and easy to make. All you need to do is mix the dry ingredients with the wet and mix briefly. The lumpier the mixture, the lighter your muffins will be.

300g Self raising flour

1 tsp Baking powder

4 tsp Butter

80g Sugar

100g Raspberries

150g Chopped white chocolate

Grated peel of a lemon

2 Eggs lightly beaten

225ml Milk

These ingredients will make 12 portions.

Preheat the oven to 200c.

Line a 12-cup muffin tin with grease paper.

Mix the flour, baking powder and butter until it looks like breadcrumbs.

Stir in the sugar, chocolate, raspberries and lemon peel.

Whisk together the eggs and milk in a jug, then pour this into the dry mixture.

Mix briefly and do not worry if the mixture looks lumpy.

Spoon the batter into the muffin cases and bake until well risen, golden and firm.

Cooking time approx 18 to 20 minutes.

Serve warm or cold. PP

Go on, mutter away to yourself

Do you ever talk to yourself? Don't worry – it is good for you. You are not going mad, but actually helping yourself to stay in control of your life.

"We give ourselves messages all the time, with the intent of controlling ourselves, whether that's telling ourselves to keep running when we're tired, or to stop eating even though we want one more slice of cake," says a psychologist from Toronto University. "We found that people act more impulsively when they can't use their inner voice, or talk themselves through a demanding task."

So – perhaps you should only worry if you have to stop and ask yourself to repeat what you just said – because you didn't catch it! PP

The Rev Dr Jo White considers the things you might want to bless...

Signs & Symbols: Bless you!

If a blessing is at the very least a prayer to God to look kindly on something, someone, some situation or place then here is a question: what would YOU want to bless?

Just as the world fights financial recession and looks at all parts of the economy to decide where to make cuts in services, so we could do a review of where we would wish to ask God to turn his loving attention. (This may sound a bit daft, because God is everywhere and knows everything, but rather like the sun is everywhere and we don't always see it because of the clouds between it and us so sometimes things, including ourselves, get between us and God also.)

Most services and certainly at every service on a Sunday, the church intercedes for the world to God. In many churches there is a rota of people who write and read aloud the prayers, and there personal preferences and styles always colour both the issues for which they pray and the way in which they do so.

This month: Listen to the person leading the intercessions, not just to the issues for which they are praying but also to their 'style'. Now write a few prayers in your own style. Get hold of a newspaper or current magazine, cut out just one or two articles upon which you would like to ask God's blessing, then perhaps glue them into a book as you pray that God's blessing will stick to these situations as the glue you are using will stick to the paper. In this way you will create your own prayer book of issues, circumstances, places and people that you would like God to bless – at this time of year you could add the signatures from the Christmas cards you received to remind you of your friends. PP

Plastic bags – the good news

The number of plastic bags given to supermarket customers for a single use has fallen dramatically in recent years. It dropped by 43 per cent from 10.6 billion in 2006 to 6.1 billion in the year to May 2010, according to the British Retail Consortium.

Where can you find a 'missionary' these days?

First of all, they are not called 'missionaries' any more – but 'mission worker'. It covers anyone who is sent out by a local church and/or Christian agency to work and witness - usually in another country. Where do they all go? Almost a third go to the continent of Africa (29%), but these days a sixth (18%) work in the United Kingdom, either among our many immigrants or at the headquarters of mission agencies.

Some mission workers go for a short-term spell, usually for under two years and mostly not requiring the learning of a new language. Other opt for 'long-term' which averages about eight years, and will require learning the local language and cross-cultural adaptation. Three-fifths (58%) of the long-term workers are in their 30s or 40s. A few have served much longer than eight years, and 1% are in their 70s or older, the oldest known being a gentleman of 91 serving in Italy! The majority (68%) of the short-term workers are in their 20s, although some are in their late teens, and a few (11%) are in their 60s spending time in mission activity after their retirement. PP

Generation Y not hostile towards religion

Young people have not inherited the rebellious hostility to the Church of their parents' generation, although for many of them religion is irrelevant for day-to-day living.

A recent study of more than 300 young people in England aged between eight and 23 - or Generation Y, as this age-group is known - found that for the majority, religion and spirituality are simply irrelevant for day-to-day living.

Young people are not looking for answers to ultimate questions and show little sign of "pick and mix" spirituality. On the rare occasions when a religious perspective is required (for example, coping with family illnesses or bereavements) they often 'make do' with a very faded, inherited cultural memory of Christianity in the absence of anything else. In this respect they will sometimes pray in their bedrooms.

But although often unfamiliar with formal religion, Generation Y are keenly aware of ethical issues. As one author comments: 'Young people today have to grow up quickly and the study showed that they often face a wide range of difficult choices. Consequently they were interested in ethics. The young people drew moral guidance from family as friends, but they also recognised the potential of religion, including Christianity, to provide them with guidelines for living.'

'Generation Y have less cultural hang ups about the Church than did their predecessors... The challenge to the Church is to provide them with the opportunities to explore and to learn about a narrative of belief of which they know little.'

These are some of the findings of an informative new book 'The Faith of Generation Y', authored by Sylvia Collins-Mayo (sociologist of religion), Bob Mayo (parish priest in West London), Sally Nash (Director of the Midlands Centre for Youth Ministry) and the Bishop of Coventry, the Rt Revd Christopher Cocksworth (who has five Generation Y children). The Faith of Generation Y, £14.99, is available at www.chpublishing.co.uk. PP

Clergymen of the Church of England By Anthony Trollope, DLT, £12.99

This handsome facsimile edition of Trollope's insightful and entertaining clerical portraits, introduced by Michael Mayne and with charming illustrations by David Eccles, is of wonderful entertainment. The great Victorian novelist scored his first popular successes with *The Warden* and *Barchester Towers*. He went on to write four more novels in the *Barsetshire Chronicles* series, which he is said to have conceived while wandering round Salisbury Cathedral on a summer evening. These gentle but often pointed sketches of evangelicals and high church vicars, of bishops and parish clergy, first appeared in *The Pall Mall Gazette*. They still tease and resonate as well as amuse today, and their reappearance in this new edition will deepen our understanding of the work of one of the great English novelists. PP

Granny ?

The little boy came home from his first day at Sunday School and informed his mother that his Sunday school teacher was Jesus' grandmother. Astonished, the mother demanded: 'What on earth makes you think that?' "Easy, said the little boy. 'She never stops talking about Jesus."

Overheard on the Wise Men's journey to Bethlehem

The camel is definitely the ship of the desert. I know it because I'm getting seasick.

OK, we got the gold. We got the frankincense. We got the myrrh. Think we should get something more practical, like nappies, maybe?

At least this gold has doubled in price since we set out from home....

Man, I'm starting to get a rush from this frankincense!

Suppose He really wanted a PlayStation?

I think we took a wrong turn back at Amal's house.

Why should I always have to be in the rear? It's somebody else's turn to get sand in his face.

I need to stop at the bazaar in the next town and pick up one more gift.

You know, I used to go to school with a girl name Beth Lehem.

They call us wise men – for following a star. But I notice they are all using satnav instead.

IT picnic

Looking over the log book kept by the computer support staff at my office, I noticed several entries stating the problem was PICNIC. I asked one of the technicians what PICNIC meant. He laughed as he told me it meant "Problem In Chair, Not In Computer."

Not all free!

The nursery school teacher was teaching her class about living in a democracy. She said: "One of the things we should be happy about is that, in this country, we are all free." One little boy stood up in protest. "No," he said indignantly. "I'm not free. I'm four."

New Year problems

As you start the New Year, does this sound like you? "Sometimes I get the feeling the whole world is against me, but deep down I know that's not true - some smaller countries are neutral."

Welcome

Seen on a fridge magnet: "Make yourself at home! Clean my kitchen."

Err....

A thought for all church councils as the New Year begins: "To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a committee."