

Church Newsround February 2010

St Oswald's Church Blankney
An Illustrated talk by Kevin Harrison
Lincolnshire's Finest Citizens
Friday March 5th at 7.30

Tickets £10 to include glass of wine light refreshments, lucky ticket draw and "Famous Faces" Quiz.

Tickets available from Info Links, Blankney Estate Office
or Di Behan (tel:322331)

All proceeds to St Oswald's Church Tower Repair Fund.

Candle Power

For centuries people lived by candle light, chandlers were held in high regard, and candle-stick makers took their place alongside butchers and bakers in the nursery rhyme catalogue of key workers.

Of course, electric light has seen off the candle for most day to day purposes, but yet lighting a candle remains powerful as a symbol of hope, prayerful and even defiance. It is indeed better to light a candle than curse the darkness, and the capacity of a small candle to enlighten even the darkest of dark spaces speaks of hope in the face of formidable odds.

That is why people light candles and place them on pricket stands at Cathedrals and Churches in ever increasing numbers. And that is why the candle lit daily for the hostage Peter Moore in Lincoln Cathedral throughout his ordeal attracted so much attention during his captivity and on his return home. That small flame became a beacon of light and life in a dark death-dealing world. It became something of an icon carrying the good will and prayers of those who may never have met Peter Moore, but who sensed some kind of solidarity with him and his family through those months and years.

So it is that Candlemas on 2nd February has become one of the iconic festivals of the Christian calendar. During the darkness of winter it speaks of light and new life as the days lengthen and the first signs of Spring start to appear. But above all, Candlemas speaks of the incarnate Christ born amongst us at Christmas and now calling us on to journey with Him as the light of the world through the dark days of Lent and Holy Week to victory over darkness and death on Easter Day.

As a Diocese, and as individual disciples, let us be drawn to the light of Christ as we embrace our future confident that the Christmas spark, fanned into a Candlemas flame, will blaze the good news of God's glory amongst us when

"The Candles call us to hope and to pray

As Christmas meets Easter on Candlemas Day".

+ John Lincoln

Lent Lunches 2010

Dates 19th and 26th March and 2nd April (Good Friday)

St. Wilfrid's Church Hall

Home-made Soup, bread, butter and cheese, tea or coffee.

Ongoing Raffle, to be drawn on 2nd April

Proceeds to be donated to The Tear Fund and Air Ambulance

Volunteers are needed to help Serve, Clear Up and, or make soup for these days.

Contact June Greenhaugh on 328642

Raffle Prizes would be most welcome too

Organised on behalf of our three Parishes.

St Wilfrid's PCC

Members of St. Wilfrid's Parochial Church Council met recently at the home of Mrs. Ann DeVries, and the following items were discussed.

Fairtrade Fortnight runs this year from February 22nd to March 7th, and people are being urged to contact their favourite tea suppliers to ask them to opt for fairly traded tea, if they haven't done so already.

St. Wilfrid's Church has been offered two tickets to the Eucharist at Lincoln Cathedral being celebrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury on Saturday 6th March 2010 at 3pm. The names of those wishing to go will be put into a hat, and the two drawn out will be given the tickets. The date for our AGM will be Monday 19th April 2010 at 7pm in church, followed by light refreshments. Nigel Dickin will chair the meeting. We will need nominations for churchwardens, and would like more volunteers for sidespeople, lesson readers and intercessors as well.

Several social events are in the pipe-line. Not all the dates have been finalized so please keep an eye on the diary in the library. On Friday 12th March we hope to have a Quiz Night with fish and chips. The Bible study group are organising Lent Lunches on Friday 19th and 26th March, and 2nd April, with the profits being shared between TEAR fund and the Air Ambulance. "The High Notes" will be performing in May, and in June MAD are offering a Gala performance of "'Allo, 'Allo" to raise funds for the dry rot repair work. Saturday 10th July is provisionally booked as the date for the Summer Fete and Garden Show.

A Lent course will run from 25th February to 25th March inclusive, at 7.30pm in the Church Hall. During the Churches Festival on May 29th and 30th, being arranged in the parishes in the LN4 area, it was suggested St. Wilfrid's organise guided walks around Metheringham, using the leaflet produced by ArtsNK, with tea and cake to follow.

Please continue saving your small change for the roof fund – Mrs. Fran Pembrey has offered to organise one or more events to raise money for this, so please watch out for further details. And if anyone has any suggestions or ideas for raising money for the roof fund, please contact either of the churchwardens. JH

St Peter's School

A belated Happy New Year to everyone. It has been an eventful start to the new term. The children have had great fun playing in the snow, building snowmen and throwing snowballs (yes, schools still do these fun things!). The playground was quite lethal at times but fortunately we have a good sized field for the children to be able to play on. We even had to close the school for one day when some members of staff were really struggling with their journeys from various different places. It was a great relief in the end to see the ice finally melt. As I write this, we have just enjoyed our latest monthly church service on the theme of Symbols. The next two services will take place on Thursday, February 25th and Thursday, March 25th (both starting at 2.15). you are most welcome to join us.
Graham Boyall Headteacher

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY IN THE THREE PARISHES

Sunday 7th 2nd Sunday Before Lent

8.00am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's
9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
10.30am	United Service – St. Wilfrid's

Sunday 14th Sunday Next Before Lent

9.00am	Holy communion – St. Oswald's
9.00am	Morning Worship – St. Peter's
10.30am	Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's

Wednesday 17th Ash Wednesday

7.30am	Holy Communion – Church Hall
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Sunday 21st 1st Sunday of Lent

9.00am	Holy Communion – St. Peter's
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10.30am Morning Worship – St. Wilfrid's

Thursday 25th

2.15pm Family service with Dunston School

Thursday 25th Lent Course

7.30pm Church Hall (Continuing for 5 weeks)

Sunday 28th 2nd Sunday of Lent

9.00am Morning Prayer followed by Communion – St. Oswald's

10.30am Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's

March

Sunday 7th 3rd Sunday of Lent

8.00am Holy Communion – St. Wilfrid's

9.00am Holy Communion – St Peter's

10.30am United Service – Metheringham Methodist Chapel

Metheringham W I

44 Hungry Ladies enjoyed an excellent meal at Martin Moor Golf Club on the 20th. Plenty of Lincolnshire grown food, 'Tates, Broccoli, Carrots and Peas !

There was a raffle. The programme for 2010 was handed out and Audrey Webb outlined some of the future visits.

The theatre visit to see Oliver in April, the outing to Holkham Hall in July and hopefully to see the Christmas Spectacular at Thursford in November.

Sporting Activities are still popular : Darts and Table Tennis as is the participation in the W.I. quiz nights. It is hoped to be able to enter three teams.

Next Meeting on Wednesday 17th February. A talk by Alan Porter – Life of an Auctioneer and Cricketer. JS

Three cheers for our 'unsung heroes'

When last year Country Life magazine decided to look for 'Unsung Heroes of the Rural Church', the editors were delighted to find the species alive and well - and widespread throughout the United Kingdom.

From empathetic church wardens to exceptionally warm-hearted lay people in the pews, the national competition was so overwhelmed with high quality candidates, that it found it impossible to narrow the finalists down to 10, and ended up with 12 instead.

The 12 finalists of that competition ended up meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury at Lambeth Palace, where he praised their empathy, warmth, and ability to bring a 'lease of life to church and village'. One of them has even succeeded in establishing his church (Eskdale) as one of the first C of E churches to host a post office.

As Dr Williams wrote in a special Country Life article: "In our countryside, armies of unsung heroes are keeping the circulation going in the community's body. They are organising community celebrations and simple local services like mothers and toddlers groups or drop-in centres. But they are increasingly stepping into the gaps that have opened up in rural society in the last ten years or so."

Nominations came from across England, with several from Scotland and Wales, too. The judges assessed factors such as the extent of nominees' service and the range of their contribution; responsibility for new initiatives; reliability and continuity; and making a measurable difference.

The judges said:

"So much that is written about the country church focuses on its architecture.... but we should also celebrate those who give so much time, energy and commitment to keeping those churches open, alive, decorated and welcoming."

"... every thriving community depends on a circle of people who contribute their time and energy to its maintenance and development. The nominations reflected how immensely varied such contributions can be . . . and also in the most touching ways how valued these contributors to parish life can be. It was a very heart-warming competition to judge."

"Many [of the nominees] were retired but with the energy levels of many people half or indeed a third of their age, devoting huge amounts of time and effort to their church, and having a lot of fun in the process. In a refreshing antidote to the prevalent celebrity culture they do what they do, not for public recognition, but because they care, they believe it matters and they enjoy it." PP

Latest finance statistics published by the Church of England

The average parishioner is giving £9 a week to their local church, according to the latest statistics from the Church of England.

To be specific: parishioners' tax-efficient planned giving averaged more than £9 a week for the first time in 2007. In fact, the total income of parishes increased by £70 million to £898 million, well above inflation.

Total voluntary income rose to £485 million or £8.02 per electoral roll member per week. At the same time, total parish expenditure rose to £838 million, with £50 million of this donated by parishes to external charities.

"Data for 2007 shows that giving to parishes by individuals continues to increase year on year, with the landmark figure of £500 million being reached for the first time. We have more than 630,000 people giving in a regular way, with nearly 90 per cent given through Gift Aid enabling parishes to reclaim £78 million from HMRC," said Dr John Preston, the Church's National Stewardship and Resources Officer.

"In a time of significant economic pressure, the Church is grateful for the committed support given by so many to their local church. Our givers on average donate more than three per cent of their incomes to the Church, and we estimate that a similar proportion is given away to other causes and charities. However, this remains short of the five per cent of disposable income recommended again by the General Synod in the summer of this year." PP

Our future clergy... at least, in the Church of England

Ever wonder how many clergy there are out there, and what the future may hold? Some recent figures can give us an idea: In 2008, another 490 candidates were accepted to train in the C of E. That meant there were then 1411 in training, in all.

Also in 2008, 574 new clergy were ordained into the Anglican church. Of those, 321 were entering full-time paid ministry. But the number of retirements also remained high. This meant overall a loss of 112 full-time paid clergy.

All in all, by the end of 2008, there were some 28,000 licensed and authorised ministers, ordained and lay, active in the Church of England.

Since 2000, the proportion of those under 30 years of age recommended for training has increased slightly - to 17 per cent. The C of E wants to further encourage young vocations to the priesthood. PP

Heaven on Earth ? Archbishop Welcomes Fairtrade Kit Kat

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, has praised the recent launch of the Fairtrade Kit Kat at Nestle's factory in York. Dr Sentamu said: "I can remember two years ago saying that Nestle should make their chocolate Fairtrade, and many people in York stood up to support the campaign for Fairtrade justice. So when I heard that Nestle was making Kit Kat Fairtrade, I simply said 'Wow!' It goes to show that people can make a difference.

"I have visited the workers at the co-operative in the Ivory Coast who will benefit from Kit Kat four-finger bar becoming Fairtrade, and I know that this is a real step forward in giving them the justice, recognition and pay they deserve.

"The next step is to make all other produce Fairtrade where possible – in particular my own favourite, the Yorkie!...In the Ivory Coast, Nestle has invested heavily in a research centre for delivering millions of high quality cocoa trees, which also has the potential to develop millet, sorghum, cassava and coffee. This is breath-taking for all concerned. Fairtrade Yorkie – here we come!" PP

Ash Wednesday

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They

mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin.

(See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The collect for today goes back to the Prayer Book, and stresses the penitential character of the day. It encourages us with the reminder of the readiness of God to forgive us and to renew us.

The Bible readings for today are often Joel 2:1-2, 12 – 18, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 – 21 and Paul's moving catalogue of suffering, "as having nothing and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10)

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Today, throughout the Church of England, receiving the mark of ashes on one's forehead is optional. Certainly the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19) The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today. PP

The Rectory, St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

While it was good to see you when you visited us last Sunday, your casual suggestion to our churchwardens that chairs would be far more comfortable than our pews was not well received. You must remember that significant numbers in any congregation firmly believe that the more uncomfortable they are, the holier they must be. Pews, generally designed several centuries ago when legs were shorter and bottoms smaller, are conducive neither to comfort nor sleep - although Colonel Marchington achieves the latter unerringly every Sunday within minutes of arrival.

At least with pews, parishioners can make some pretence at kneeling, adopting that peculiar crouch only ever seen in church life. Attempt that with chairs and you are assured of sending the one in front sliding across the floor with a shriek any banshee would be proud of. Chairs may be all very well in your own church, so you can create space for the delights of liturgical dance and baby clinics, but we prefer something more immovable. Little Miss Thripp has, over the years, created something of a nest where she sits, quietly bringing in cushions, travelling rugs and her own supply of books and peppermints – although we did have to draw the line at the primus stove, since it encouraged Major Hoare to install a drinks cabinet in his pew.

Pews, unlike rows of chairs, also create territorial behaviour. If a visitor should sit in a pew where regulars have sat for the last 50 years, it is regarded as if it were the invasion of Poland. One innocent family once chose the pew where generations of the Psmith family have sat since dinosaurs roamed the land. The Psmiths had no intention of ceding territory peacefully and so for the whole of Mattins, one pew which should have held 6 people sat 9. When they stood to sing, the line exploded into the aisles on both sides, returning to their compressed state, necessitating staggered shallow breathing, when re-seated.

I will concede, however, that we made one mistake some years ago when the pews were re-varnished without having been fully cleaned first. The result is that every time the congregation stands, the organ is drowned out by the sound of tearing, while coats and jackets reluctantly part company with wood.

No, your congregation may relax in the luxury of padded chairs, but we will stoutly maintain our holy discomfort.

Your loving uncle, Eustace

Signs & Symbols: Ashes

Many churches offer a service on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent where ashes are used to mark each person's forehead with the sign of the cross – known as the Imposition of Ashes. It's a strange feeling; first the grittiness when they are first placed, then a tingling sensation, then a time of self-consciousness of knowing they are there like a dirty smudge. Lastly comes the 'Decision'. Should I wipe them away before leaving the church or later? But what is the point of it all?

There are many references in the Bible to people using ashes as signs of either penitence or preparation for an important event (Jeremiah 6:26). In church records, ashes are used for penitents by the sixth century, but it is not until the beginning of the eleventh century that the faithful took part in a ceremony on the Wednesday before Lent that included the imposition of ashes. It is only later that this came to be called Ash Wednesday.

At first clerics and men had ashes sprinkled on their heads while women had the sign of the cross made with ashes on their foreheads.

In the twelfth century the rule developed that the ashes were to be created by burning palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday – and in most churches this is still how they are made today.

Over the centuries the emphasis of meaning for the imposed ashes has changed, from a preparation for baptism, a renewal of baptismal vows, to an understanding of a community's preparation for the event of the Paschal mystery of rebirth at Easter. PP

An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament: Genesis

This is the first of a new series which will give you an overview of the books of the Old Testament. This month we look at Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

Historically, Jews and Christians believed that Moses was the author/complier of the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch). However, this view has been questioned by scholars over the last two centuries. As the title suggests, Genesis is primarily about beginnings. In the first of its 10 sections (chapters 1-11), it records the beginnings of our world, in the account of the creation of the heavens and the earth, human beings, sin's effect on the world, marriage and family, society and civilisation and blessing and curses. In the remaining sections, it tells of God's dealings with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, and their families. In this story of the Patriarchs we see how God is establishing a people who will bless the world, as he seeks to bless them.

The book of Genesis is key to understanding the whole of the Bible. It is supremely about relationships; the relationships between God and the created order, God and human beings, and between human beings themselves. Fundamentally man has been created in the image of God, by which he can relate to God in a personal way. However, Genesis plots how this relationship was broken by sin, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God, resulting in the fall of both human beings and the created order. Clearly by creating people with free will, God risks the possibility that they might reject him; this is inherent in his love for human kind.

In Genesis, God is presented as supreme over his creation, but he enters into covenants with the world (the rainbow following the flood) and with Abraham and his descendents (circumcision), pledging his love and faithfulness to them and calling them to respond similarly to him in faith.

A key verse for our understanding of Genesis comes right at the beginning of the book: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them' (1:27).

It reminds us that God is fundamental to living. If we don't have a sense of the centrality of God's place in life, we will never get our lives right. PP

National Salt Awareness Week 1 – 7 Feb

Too much salt can do very unpleasant things to you: from high blood pressure to osteoporosis, obesity, stomach cancer, kidney stones, and stroke. Little wonder, then, that the group Consensus Action on Salt and Health has launched a National Salt Awareness Week. (see their website: www.actiononsalt.org.uk)

Did you know that cutting people's salt intake by one teaspoon a day could save around four million lives every year? So says the British Medical Journal. On average, we in the West eat almost 10g of salt a day, despite the World Health Organisation warning that we should stick to 5g (or one teaspoon) a day. PP

Sleep – for your brain's sake!

A good night's sleep really does help your brain work the next day. In fact, if you have a new experience, go to sleep on it. You will wake up to find that your brain has consolidated and made sense of the new information better than if you stayed awake. Sleep appears to strengthen connections between communication nerve cells in the brain, a process which seems to form the basis of learning and memory. The research was done by scientists in Switzerland. PP

Have you a DAC Radio if so then tune in – and enjoy!

United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) has begun broadcasting nationally in the UK on DAB Digital Radio. UCB follows Premier Radio into the UK National Christian Radio scene. UCB UK was previously available on digital radio in some areas but can now be heard across the whole UK, including Northern Ireland. PP