

St John's Church

serving Stanborough, Lemsford, Cromer Hyde



*Typhoon Aid :
see page 5*

*Gift boxes given
for Operation
Christmas Child*

Parish Magazine

Dec 2013/Jan 2014

£1



Stefan Kitching gave a fascinating demonstration of bee-keeping at Harvest Festival; **Mary Douglas** receives her Certificate of Theology from the Rt. Rev. John Sherringham, at the Abbey: and **Jean Mitchinson** retires as co-ordinator of Church Cleaning



December 2013

Sunday 1st Advent 1

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Morning Prayer *with Sunday Club*

Tuesday 3rd 7.30 pm PCC meeting

Sunday 8th Advent 2

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Parish Communion *with Sunday Club*

Sunday 15th Advent 3

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Nativity Celebration (*Family Service*)

12.30 pm Baptism Service

Tuesday 17th 7 pm Police Carol Service

Thursday 19th 2.30 pm School Carol Service

Sunday 22nd

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

5 pm Carols by Candlelight *followed by mulled wine and mince pies*

Christmas Eve

5 pm Crib Service *for the very young and their families*

11 pm Midnight Communion *as Christmas Day itself arrives*

Christmas Day 10.30 am Family Carols with address

Sunday 29th

No 8 am service 11 am Parish Communion

*** *Morning Prayer 10 am every Wednesday* *****

Readings (*preacher reads the gospel at Parish Communion*)

Year A begins, with a focus on St Matthew's Gospel.

1st Isaiah 2.1-5, Matthew 24.36-44

8th Romans 15.4-13, Matthew 3.1-12

Christmas services: readers will be advised

29th Hebrews 2.10-end, Matthew 2.13-end

Reminder: the Vicar's day off duty is Friday.

Coffee after 11am Services.

New Year's Day No 10 am Morning Prayer

Sunday 5th Epiphany / the Twelfth Day of Christmas!

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Morning Prayer

5 pm Christingle Service for all ages, *and with young people leading*

Sunday 12th The Baptism of Christ

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Parish Communion *Sunday Club restarts*

Sunday 19th Epiphany 2

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Family Service

Sunday 26th Epiphany 3

8 am Holy Communion

11 am Parish Communion

Monday 3rd February 7.30 pm PCC meeting

*** *Morning Prayer 10 am every Wednesday* *****

Readings (preacher reads the gospel at Parish Communion)

5th Isaiah 60.1-6, Ephesians 3.1-12

12th Acts 10.34-43, Matthew 3.13-end

26th I Corinthians 1.10-18, Matthew 4.12-23

Reminder: the Vicar's day off duty is Friday.

Coffee after 11am Services. Sunday Club at 11am save Family Service

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter to you, the period of Advent is fast approaching and the count down to Christmas starts and if you are lucky to have a calendar with treats a chocolate each day! Advent also offers us a time for reflection and prayer as we near Christmas – and indeed the St Albans Diocese initiative this year ‘*Encounters*’ in Advent invites us to think more deeply about what it really means to await the birth of Jesus. So if you’d like to enter into a new encounter, you’ll find some more information later in this magazine - and for those of you who prefer the chocolate – why not buy yourselves and the children around you a Fairtrade ‘*Real Advent Calendar*’ (see page 11).



Having just returned from a conference for Chaplains who minister to older people, the idea of looking at the Christmas story through a new lens occurred to me. An encounter if you like! At Christmas, the focus is naturally on the birth of Jesus – the Word made flesh – God’s gift to us and on centre stage are Baby Jesus and the teenage Mary. But what of the older characters in the Christmas Story? There’s Joseph, thought to be older in years than Mary, the Shepherds, who patiently look over their sheep each night prepared to outwit the predators, and the three Wise Men from the East – older and wiser – whose wisdom is clearly recognised as a blessing.

And the ‘bookends’ to the story: Elizabeth and Zechariah – the parents of John the Baptist – John’s conception we are told took place in Elizabeth’s old age; and finally Anna and Simeon, who have served in the Temple devoutly for years and are the first to recognise that Jesus is God among us.

So this Christmas as we gaze upon the baby in the manger who brings us the gift of new life and hope, let’s rejoice in the value that age and wisdom brings us too.

I wish you a blessed and peaceful Christmas, with or without the chocolates!

Sue Stilwell

Funeral

18th October, **David Andrews**.
We express our condolences to his family and friends.

Thank you to **Jean Mitchinson**, (pictured inside front cover) who retires at the end of this year as co-ordinator of Church Cleaning. She writes "Please pass on my gratitude to everyone who has helped keep the church clean over many years, and to Eileen Martindale for agreeing to take over from me. There are still gaps in the Rota for 2014!"

Martin Shopland has now raised over £6,000 for Isobel Hospice from his 140 mile sponsored walk.

Well done to **Kevin Earl** and his team of bikers who earned sponsorship of over £800, plus Gift Aid. Half will go to St John's, and half to the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Historic Churches Trust.

Congratulations also to **Mary Douglas** (see inside front cover) who has gained a Certificate of Theology. This required 6 modules over a 2 year course covering old and new testament, history, ethics and doctrine with essays on each. More details . www.christianstudies.org.uk/certificate.html. Mary organised the **Operation Christmas Child** again this year—see front cover.

Church Income

The church's income has not kept pace with inflation (30% between 2005 and 2012). Nor has it matched the rise in Parish Share (the amount we must pay to the Diocese) of 20% between 2005 and 2012. We face another deficit this year following the one of £7,000 last year, so any extra donations **right now** would be **very welcome**.

Parish Magazine

Copy for the next double issue, Feb/March by **19th January**.

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Carol Services for Christmas

Come and enjoy lots of carols in church - enter the real spirit of Christmas through the joy of music and the wonder of the Christmas Story. We shall be singing carols throughout the Christmas season, starting on Sunday 15th December with the children's nativity celebration. Our *main* Carol Services are:

Tuesday 17th December at 7 pm

Service arranged by the Hertfordshire Constabulary
with music led by the Police Choir

Sunday 22nd December

11 am Service of Nine Lessons & Carols - the traditional one

5 pm Carols by Candlelight – a more informal service of worship, readings and music in the candlelit church.

See the calendar for details of all our other services, through to the Christingle on 5th January at 5 pm.

Philippines typhoon disaster

Please support a BRING AND BUY SALE at 13
Lemsford Village
on Saturday 7th December from 11 am.

A practical way to raise funds locally. All offers of help will be most welcome – donated items, cakes etc, or running your own stall for the cause. Banner on the roundabout will add to the publicity.

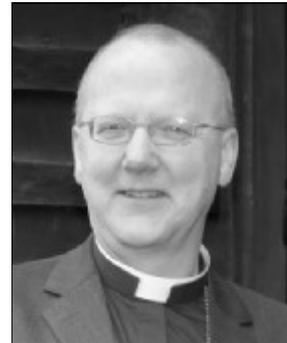


Please contact Edna Stephens **tel.321802** if you can help in any way, or email edward.cardale@btopenworld.com

St John's, along with every Church in the diocese, has been presented with a copy of a book just published: *Saints and Pilgrims in the Diocese of St Albans*. Written by our Bishop, this is a large and impressive tome, 396 pages, well produced and illustrated. All profits are to be used for Christian Charitable work.

For every day of the year an individual is described and lessons drawn from their life. Lemsford has two entries, one (14th October) is Lord Palmerston, who died at Brocket Hall. The other (10th December) is George Stephen, who was created a Baron, taking the title Lord Mount Stephen, and was buried beside his wife right by the South door of St John's.

The Bishop writes: "It is my hope and prayer that *Saints & Pilgrims* will be widely used in St Albans Diocese and indeed beyond. The inspiring witness of women and men through the centuries is a rich and vital legacy for Christians today, and it is an encouragement but perhaps not a surprise to have found such dedicated servants of God in so many places in this region.



It has been a tremendous privilege to research and write *Saints & Pilgrims*. I have discovered little known stories of faithful endeavour against overwhelming odds, tales of quiet and faithful persistence, underpinned by prayer, and along the way I have of course revisited the names of those known so well to us such as St Alban, Francis Bacon and Christina of Markyate.

I pray that you will gain insight and understanding from this book. Above all, I pray that it will enable you to draw closer to Him from whom we derive all that we are and do."

Editor's note: This is an excellent book and, at the introductory offer of £20, an absolute bargain. A great Christmas present if you act quickly.

Church flowers—*Dedications*

Would you like to dedicate the flowers in the church to a loved one? On a dozen occasions per year the flowers placed in church could be recorded, by way of a simple message published in the parish magazine, as being *in memory of ...* A £20 contribution is suggested to commemorate the occasion. This would be shared equally between the Flower Fund and the church's general funds.

The church flowers are arranged on a rota basis by a small group of volunteers (just 10 ladies) and each arrangement lasts two weeks, sometimes even three. In addition there are weddings and major festivals such as Christmas and Easter so that the dates on which flowers could be recorded as dedicated to the memory of a particular person are limited.

I suspect we have all admired the high standard of floral decoration that St John's has enjoyed over so many years. It does not happen in five minutes. The flowers and – as important the foliage – have to be selected and bought for freshness, colour co-ordination, durability, and in some instances gardens plundered for the green background. In the church, the previous decoration needs dismantled, the 'oasis' soaked and the arrangement then gradually built up to look good both from the front pew and the back. Bend down a hundred times and stretch up fifty times for the pulpit arrangement - or so it feels at the end of the morning's work.

These unsung pillars of the church are led by Mrs Sara Poole: Jean Mitchinson, Janet English, Kirsty Humphries, Jean Dance, Juliet Nall-Cain, June Tomlin, Helen McLean, Merle Hards, Margaret Dowdy. They carry with flair (and advancing years) their role of embellishing the church. They find it a 'lot of fun' but would very much like to share 'doing the flowers' with any others who might be interested. Whether you have previous skills, knowledge, or just plain enthusiasm, you would be very welcome in the group. If you might be interested in joining the group do please get in touch with Sara Poole on 01707 320358 or indeed any of the other ladies mentioned.

If you would like to contribute to the church flowers and have a dedication published in the magazine, please contact Mrs Jackie Spry, churchwarden and assistant treasurer, who will both record the dedication (and send it on to the magazine editor) and the financial contribution made to the church's funds.

The flower rota runs from April through to March the following year. The known available dates for 2014 are: 4 January, 25 January and 15 February. As soon as dates for the rest of 2014 are available we will publish them in the magazine. For contributions of any sort we thank you.

Martin English

DEFICIT: In 2012 to keep the church running St John's had to spend **£7,000** more than it received in regular income.

When you read this, about a month will have passed since a golf colleague sent this email from his hospital bed in the Coronary Care Unit.

“Just to let you know that I'll not be there tomorrow. In short I cycled to swimming yesterday, swam, died, came back to life and I'm feeling much better now. With deference to Henry VIII, on Saturday morning

I: Cycled; Swam; Drowned; Died; Revived; Survived.

It seems that I swallowed some water while exerting myself. I finished the length but passed out, sank to the bottom (apparently) and was fished out and resuscitated by the lifeguard (who undoubtedly saved my life) with their defibrillator. I had morphine, GTN sprays, aspirin, injections and felt terrible. They said paramedics were on their way as well as the Air Ambulance so no need to worry at all (with that lot turning up I thought the opposite). The pool was empty and they'd cancelled the kids' lessons that followed so they were all on the other side of the glass looking at me looking like a dead kipper, so no fuss caused by me there then! To top it all despite me telling him I paid £8.50 a month standing order to support the Air Ambulance, the doctor on the helicopter said I could go to hospital by road. You never know what adventures life has in store do you. Kind regards, A lucky lucky lucky”

Despite his frightening experience, you will detect that he has a sense of humour.

A few weeks earlier, the children read about the Philippian jailer in Acts 16. The story is of Paul and Silas, who had been thrown into prison, experiencing a violent earthquake which caused the prison doors to be opened and a terrified jailer about to commit suicide. Paul assured him that no one had escaped so not to harm himself. Then the jailer cries out one of the great questions of the Bible, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’ (Another would be Pilate’s question to Jesus, ‘What is truth?’). Paul’s reply is a classic salvation text in scripture, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved’. (Acts 16:31). Paul is following the example of Jesus himself who, having seen to the physical needs of the person, looked beyond the physical to their spiritual needs.

For example, the haemorrhaging woman, '*your faith has saved you*'; the centurion's servant, '*I tell you I have not found such great faith even in Israel*'; the blind man calling out to him, '*receive your sight, your faith has saved you*'; and others.

Both men, the golfer and the jailer, needed someone to help them physically and the latter by his question, spiritually as well. What different stories these would have been if those helping had not been competent. This begs two questions of all of us: are we competent to help someone spiritually; and, are we learning from competent people either by sermon, study or fellowship? The Bishop's initiatives are focussed precisely on this that we might (i) go deeper into God; (ii) transform our communities; and (iii) make new disciples, and it follows the injunction, which St. Peter wrote to the early disciples, to be ready to give a reason for the hope they had. (*1 Pet. 3:15*).

Why is the New Testament so absorbed by *faith* and *hope*? This Christmastime should give us the answer. God the Father realises that we are incapable of dealing with our own sin, no matter how much we love Him and try to follow His ways. So He sent His only Son, Jesus, to take our sin upon Himself and get it dealt with once and for all on the cross. If we accept that, then we have the hope of eternal life with God the Trinity, all the angels and all those believers who are saints in the glory of heaven. So let us enjoy the words of the angel to the shepherds, '*Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people.*' (*Lk.2:10*).



We have had a wonderful and very busy term which has seen many exciting events at St John's – and we have not even started the Christmas activities yet!! The term started with a 'Wonder Day' of wildlife photography with expert photographer, Iain Green. Iain worked with all the children at St Johns: the older ones at Lemsford Springs and the younger ones on our school grounds. He also ran a parent and child workshop after school. They all had a fantastic experience of observing their environment closely and capturing some brilliant images of nature – some to rival the professionals! You may well have seen the article in the local newspaper which featured this event.

Class 3 had an amazing day as Roman citizens, dressed up and experiencing what life was like for many Romans. The session was led by an 'History Off the Page' expert who brought in Roman artefacts and hands on activities which kept the children fully engrossed all day and helped them really learn about the Roman experience.

During Book Week in October, we invited the author James Campbell to come and talk to the children and he proved to be an inspiring and motivational speaker – again all the children at St John's were able to take part in this.

Thank you to our wonderful LSA for helping to provide these valuable experiences through their hard work, raising funds to support these opportunities for our children.

It has been a term of many sporting activities too with Yr 5 and Yr 3 Fun Runs at Stanborough where our teams did really well. Year 3 are pictured below, as is Ben Cracknell in Yr 5 who won his heat and went through to the area final – coming 2nd overall. Well done Ben!



Class 3 and Class 4 have been playing Tag Rugby with Welwyn Rugby Club this term and have both been in the Tag Rugby Festivals for their year group at the Club.

Class 4 led our Remembrance Assembly on Friday 8th November and we all observed the two minutes silence during the assembly as well as on Monday 11th. Some wonderful thoughts, prayers and poems were written by the children.

We are now approaching the beginning of Christmas preparation both in our worship, our learning and in organising the festivities. Our Carol Service is on Thursday 19th December at 2.30pm – do join us if you would like to!

Mandy Evans Headteacher

A great way to share the Christmas Story

The Real Advent Calendar is a new and fun way for parents, grandparents and Godparents to share the Christmas story. Behind each of the 25 windows there is a Fairtrade chocolate star and a few words from the Christmas story. Behind the final window there is a 24-page Christmas story booklet to read, keep and enjoy.

As well as celebrating the true meaning of Christmas, the calendar makes a charity donation to The Children's Society from every sale.

The Real Advent Calendar is available from Tesco and stores nationwide and selected retailers for £3.99.



www.realadvent.co.uk

*Below is the latest blog from **Caroline Noland**, the young American who is working with **Jane Jerrard**, our Church Missionary Society (CMS) Partner in Pakistan. Her blog, complete with videos, is at <http://carolinenoland.wordpress.com/>.*

The noise and the sound and the **orchestra of activity hold your attention hostage.** The motorcycle horns honk, the car tires shriek, the rickshaw drivers yell, the donkeys neigh, the bells on the feet of the camels jingle, the men voices lividly debate as chai slips down their throats.



The draft of a passing vehicle whips a stray newspaper around my feet and reminds me to pay attention. Three roads intersect at a watering hole for animals and I'm one of two women out and about. The men control and command attention from the unruly traffic, while young men on motorcycles attempt to hit me rather than obey my outstretched palm as hitting me might be an avenue to conversation. As I place my sandaled foot down on top of dirt and trash, dodging oncoming vehicles, I worry not only about my safety, but that of the 2 boys playing tag across from me. **My heart beat trips** as the toddler howls with laughter, tumbles into the street, falling down before a motorcycle rushes by. My hand clinches my dupatta under my chin and **I feel my blood pulsing.**

A crowd of men stoops over ahead, surveying the work of a man sitting on the ground. Giant ice blocks the size of small refrigerators line the alley as the blocks perch on burlap sacks. As the man chisels away, releasing chunks and chips of frozen paradise, the wind picks up and **I feel the coolness rush upon me.** Drops of melted ice land on my feet and the fresh sensation in the day's sun **sends shivers up my spine.**

A young boy sits on the doorstep of the house a few steps deeper into the alley. Beside him rests a basket big enough for at least 3 Baby Moses', but that currently is filled to overflowing with flowers. He skilfully strings them along with white beads onto garlands that will

grace the necks of honoured guests. As he rustles through the petals, picking the most beautiful blooms, **their scent wafts through the air. My nose cannot help but gulp in this gentle fragrance that seems to paint the air with pleasantness.**

My favorite stop is just before I emerge into the market at the end of the alley- a naan bakery. Twenty men fill the store as they pound out dough, pull naan out from the depths of underground ovens, and stack the beautiful pieces into piles in the window. The aroma quickly overtakes the scent of flowers and **my mouth begins to water.** Just one, I tell myself as I tear off a piece of the fresh baked goodness and walk through the crowded streets. **The naan's warmth slides down my throat and I seem to feel it hit bottom in my belly.**

Piles upon piles upon piles of spices line the entranceway into the heart of the market. **Like a landing strip for an airplane, they beckon you to draw near and stop over.** Seeds and powders, oranges and yellows, sticks and nuts- all wait eagerly as my eyes pour over the Urdu script, **dancing with the swirls of the letters,** reading the names of the spices, and calling my early language lessons back to me.

This street that overwhelms my senses reminds me life is in our midst. Whatever we hear or feel or touch or know or smell or taste or see. They are all reminders to be present. **To live full and deeply.** To gather about yourself things that remind you of beauty, curiosity, joy, depth, and passion- so that you might relish in them, enjoy them, and share them freely.

Perhaps this is Emmanuel. Christ has come to enter into our own human senses, to experience our bodies, to be present with us, to share in the taste of Bread and Wine, to feel the wind and the storms engulf him, to feel gut wrenching pain, to have spices poured over His body in sacrifice, **and to point us towards abundant living so that we might know and share and hope in this Great Love.**

May we each be brought to life by the **holiness that surrounds us in the ordinary,** even on the streets where we live.

- 1) Which Christmas carol has been voted the most popular one of all?
- 2) What carol tells us, "Then entered in those wise men three, / Full reverently upon the knee"?
- 3) What carol says Jesus had "no crib for a bed."
- 4) What carol contains the line, "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing"?
- 5) What carol quotes the angels saying to the shepherds, "All glory be to God on high, / And to the earth be peace"?
- 6) What carol fancifully describes "angels bending near the earth / To touch their harps of gold"?
- 7) What carol says of Jesus' birth, "While mortals sleep, the angels keep / Their watch of wondering love"?
- 8) What carol says of Christ: "Mild He lays His glory by, / Born that man no more may die"?
- 9) What carol says to the wise men, "Sages, leave your contemplations, / Brighter visions beam afar"?
- 10 A snorter: A carol began in the ancient church as *one single word*? What was that word?

1 Silent Night
 2 The First Noel.
 3 Away in a Manger.
 4 O Come, All Ye Faithful.
 5 While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night
 6 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear.
 7 O Little Town of Bethlehem."
 8 Hark, the Herald Angels Sing.
 9 Angels from the Realms of Glory
 10 "Oh!" Called "The Great O of Advent," it was intended to express a deep sense of longing for the coming of the Saviour. As time went by, other phrases were added to that "O," such as, "O Dayspring, come and give us light." In 1851 all such phrases were combined into the carol, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."