

Saints ALIVE

*The magazine of:
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe
St. Michael's, Eggington
St. Michael and All Angels,
Billington
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills*

February 2017

60p



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from the villages and from Good Shepherd**

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And Pulford's Year 1 discuss their Top 10 Bible Stories

All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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Best Kept Secrets

by Rev. Noel McGeeney

I have discovered three places within a radius of less than twenty miles from Heath and Reach that are oases of spirituality. You don't have to travel far to experience special places, though going on a pilgrimage has its own merits.

The first place is St. Michael's Priory, The WELL at Willen, about twelve miles from home. I have booked the venue for our Quiet afternoon in January and will get a real feel for the place then. On Wednesdays and Fridays there is a communion service at 12.15pm and a library with thousands of books. So a fine spiritual resource not very far away at all.

The second place is the Buddhist monastery on the Hemel road, called Amaravati. Every Saturday 2-4pm there is a free introduction to meditation led by one of the monks, with questions and answers at the end of the session. Three meditations are practised: a sitting meditation with a full body scan lasting about 45 minutes; a standing meditation lasting about ten minutes; and a walking meditation lasting about thirty minutes. They don't practise a lying down meditation. Again, another oasis of spirituality.

A third best kept secret is The Filling Station set up to support parishes. They meet in village halls and have a *come along to tea and muffins* and a modern style of praise, healing and song meant as a place to top up your faith (hence "filling station"). Locally the meeting is held at Bellows Mill, Eaton Bray every third Tuesday evening.

Best kept secrets if you ask me; it took me three years to discover them, even though I had heard them mentioned. It is not until you go there to see for yourself can you experience it for real. The Buddhist monastery attracts scores of young people every Saturday afternoon. The beauty of these places is being with others in different prayer styles.

What other best kept secrets are about waiting to be discovered?

With spring in the air and adding a spring to my step I am discovering more and more of Rushmere Country Park. Have you ever been to the pet cemetery there, dating back to the 30s and 40s? All the little headstones to family pets. We saw it last year covered with bluebells, though we did need the satellite navigation on the phone to help locate it!

Being curious and wanting to explore is what makes us human. There is a buzz and a sense of being alive when we explore new situations and go out of our comfort zones.

I love the question "when was the last time you did something for the first time"? There are three places suggested here as oases of spirituality not very far away at all. Join with some friends and experience together The WELL at Willen, The Buddhist monastery near Great Gaddesden on the Hemel road and the Filling Station at Eaton Bray.

PS: if you want to go a bit farther there is a fourth best kept secret called Contemplative Fire that meets in St. Mary's Church Wendover.

Fr. Noel McGeeney

Our normal pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays

8am Holy Communion

9.15am Parish Eucharist

11.15am All Age Service:

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Communion

11.15am Holy Baptism (2nd & 4th Sunday)

6pm Evening Worship

1st Sung Evensong, with augmented choir

2nd Said Evening Prayer

3rd Full choral Evensong followed by

Benediction

4th Said Evening Prayer

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)

12.00pm Wednesday (BCP on 1st Wednesday)

10.00am Thursday (said with hymns)

9.00am Saturday

Morning Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

9.00am Monday – Friday

Evening Prayer: St. Hugh's Chapel

4.30pm Monday – Friday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

For details of other services please visit:

www.linslade-parish.org.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays

8am Holy Communion

11am Parish Communion

(1st Sunday: Family Service)

For details of other services please visit:

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

Sundays

1st & 3rd Sundays: 9.15am Parish Communion

St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington

Sundays

11am Parish Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

Sundays

9.30am Parish Communion

(2nd Sunday: Family Communion)

Plus 4th Sunday, 3.30pm Messy Church at the Recreation Ground

Shared Prayer: 6.30pm on alternate Thursdays.

(Venues vary – please contact Nerissa Walters 01525 371615 for details).

Good Shepherd, Greenleas School, Sandhills:

Sundays at 9.45am

1st & 3rd: Communion

2nd: Messy Church

4th: All Age Worship

Service times may vary according to circumstances and on special occasions.

Small Saints, for toddlers and their carers. Tuesdays 10am – 11.30am (term time).

Sunday Saints, for age 4+ year olds, meets during 9.15am Sunday service at All Saints.

ACTIVE (Senior Youth Group for age 11+) meets on 1st & 3rd Sundays of each month

7.15pm-8.45pm in All Saints.

New Beginnings Bereavement Support Café, offering friendship, support and understanding

1st Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints.

Choir Practice: Friday evenings: Juniors 6.30pm; Adults 7.30pm.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30pm-9.30pm.

Spire Coffee Shop: Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am-3.30pm.

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

We are delighted to announce that Rev Steve Marsh has been appointed as Pioneer Minister for the Church of the Good Shepherd with Pastoral responsibility for St Michael's Billington. He is married to Jenny and they have a 5 year old son named Isaac. Steve has been a curate in the Diocese of Portsmouth for the past 3 ½ years. Prior to ordination, Steve was a car design engineer.

*** **

Unwanted Gifts Wanted

The Preservation Trust's annual appeal for duplicated or unwanted Christmas and birthday presents is being made again in 2017. Donated gifts are recycled (or in other words, sold) on its May Day stall to raise funds for the repair and maintenance of All Saints. Gifts can be dropped in to Dillamore Furnishers in the High Street as in previous years, or if you find difficulty managing this, there will be a receiving box in the north aisle of church. Please try to use Dillamore's if you can. Thank you



Worth a smile

**Romance, marriage and all that stuff –
the way children see it....**

How do you decide whom to marry?

No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with. *(Kirsten, age 10)*

What is the right age to get married?

23 is the best age because you know the person FOREVER by then. *(Camille, age 10)*

How can a stranger tell if two people are married?

You might have to guess, based on whether they seem to be yelling at the same kids. *(Derrick, age 8)*

What do most people do on a date?

Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say, if you listen long enough. *(Lynnette, age 8 - isn't she a treasure?)*

When is it okay to kiss someone?

When they're rich. *(Pam, age 7)*

Is it better to be single or married?

It's better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them. *(Anita, age 9)*

How would you make a marriage work?

Tell your wife that she looks pretty, even if she looks like a truck. *(Ricky, age 10 - smart fellow)*



Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, December:

No weddings at All Saints

Holy Baptism, December:

No baptisms at All Saints

R.I.P. December:

2: Vida Thomas at Crownhill; 9: Madeleine Greinel at St. Barnabas, Renee Merry at Crownhill; 12: Audrey Mackenzie at Crownhill; 14: Frances Morrow at St. Barnabas, Fr. Peter Lymbery at All Saints Soulbury; 15: Irene Grace at All Saints; 16: Betty Chapman at Crownhill; 20: Derek Williamson at Crownhill; 21: Kenneth Gates at Crownhill; 22: Gertrude Eatwell at Amersham; 23: Alfred Gay at Crownhill; 30: Raymond Turney at All Saints

'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'

Years Mind, February:

1: Christopher Blackbird Taylor, Richard Bonham; 3: Frank Audas; 4: Ted Summerfield; 6: Thomas Nash; 7: Annie Turney, Stan Slater, Yiu To Lau, Lilian Baines; 8: Eric Choake; 9: George Waudby; 10: George Pepper; 11: Stanley Boyce, Doreen Perry, Christine Griffin; 12: Patricia Lethbridge Farmer, Frederick Bester; 13: Mary Yirrell, Linda Gurney, Ruby Krzywopulski; 14: John Olds, Ida Kempson; 15: Nina Bolton, Leslie Brown, Gertrude Turner; 18: Bessie Scraggs; 19: Edgar Conquest, Terence Bird, John Eggleton; 20: Frank Bates; 21: Pamela Gilbert, Ivy Wood; 23: Dorothy Collor, Bryn Gittins, Lilian Cowley, Janet Garfield, Madge Vincent; 26: Florence Walsh, Maud Mills, Elsie Bates, Peggy King, Irene Scott; 27: Tom Skevington, Ivy Francis; 28: Stanley Kemp



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC LIVE PROFESSIONAL CONCERTS

11th February 2017 in the Library Theatre at 7.30pm

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www.leightonbuzzardlibrarytheatre.co.uk;
Details at lbmusic.co.uk



Pulford VA Lower School

Head Teacher: Mr Dave Heather

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulford.beds.sch.uk



My Favourite Bible Story By Year 1 at Pulford School

When asked to name their top ten favourite bible story the 5 year olds at Pulford School responded as follows-

10. Little Red Riding Hood
9. Zaccheus
8. Feeding of the Five Thousand
7. Easter
6. Joseph
5. Daniel
4. Noah
3. Jesus walking on water
2. The nativity
1. Adam and Eve



And the reasons for their choices-

I liked it when "Jesus shares bread and wine with the three kings"

"Once upon a time there was a boy called Daniel. His father's name is Abraham. He was thrown into the Lions but he didn't get eaten."

"My favourite story is Daniel because I like Lions."

"Once upon a time there was a little boy and one day Jesus came to town and the little boy couldn't see then Jesus saw the little boy and said come down and they had a good laugh in the end"

"I like the one where he walked on water because it was AMAZING!"

"Once upon a time a long time ago Adam and Eve lived with lots of animals and had lots of fruits and one day Adam told Eve to eat the poisonous fruit."



太極拳

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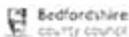
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Bells rung in honour of Terry Warburton

This is an extract from a recently received article to acknowledge the enormous contribution made by Terry Warburton to the restoration of All Saints. As I write, we hold Terry very much in our thoughts and prayers as he recovers from surgery.

JD.

Many of you will remember the splendid day of festivities and Service of Thanksgiving held last May to mark the end of the restoration and repair programme. Barry Eglesfield (Retired Tower Captain) tells me that in addition to the bells at All Saints being rung for the occasion, he and his band also rang a ¼ peal on the beautiful bells at Priory Church, Dunstable that day.

He continues: Later in the year, on All Saints Sunday, our patronal festival, we were delighted to welcome Mark Regan, a former tower captain in the golden years of ringing at All Saints. Mark and his band of ringers rang an excellent peal on the bells in honour of Terry. I think this was the first time they were rung really well since his last visit. The nicest thing was that his son William M. Regan, rang the treble.



Bedfordshire Association

On Sunday, 15 May 2016 in 53m

Dunstable, Bedfordshire
Priory Church of St Peter
Tenor: 23-2-15 in E♭

1280 Bristol Surprise Major

- 1 Angela Blackburn
- 2 Julie A Haseldine
- 3 Ruth Stokes
- 4 Alan M Shepherd
- 5 Richard A Horne
- 6 Christopher C Stokes
- 7 Andrew Haseldine (C)
- 8 Barry Eglesfield

On Sunday, 30 October 2016 in 3h 37m

Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire
All Saints
Tenor: 35

5040 Cambridge Surprise Maximus Composed by James Clatworthy

- 1 William M Regan
- 2 Rosalind J Keech
- 3 David C Brown
- 4 Alexandra J Hajok
- 5 Craig P Homewood
- 6 James Clatworthy
- 7 Tom R Childs
- 8 Simon A Rudd
- 9 Mark Regan (C)
- 10 Daniel Jones
- 11 Christopher J Pickford
- 12 Nicholas D Brown

Rung to celebrate the completion of the current restoration and repair program at All Saints, Leighton Buzzard and in thanksgiving for all the efforts of Mr Terry Warburton MBE, Appeal Director, All Saints Preservation Trust.

For the Patronal Festival and to mark Terry Warburton's dedicated service to this church. And a birthday compliment to Tom Roucoux.

The role of the deacon in the Communion service:



So often the things we do at church can seem rather odd. Think about it. A man in a dress wanders in behind some candles, stands at an altar and mumbles some words over a wafer on a little metal dish and a chalice of wine. Mercifully I have not been charged with writing a comprehensive guide to the Divine Mysteries but I have been asked to write a little about the deacon's role in Holy Communion.

Firstly it's important to know that 'deacon' simply means 'servant'. If you think of everything you see the deacon do at Holy Communion as a character below stairs in Downton Abbey you'll not be too far off the truth.

The ordination service puts it like this:

Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known. Theirs is a life of visible self-giving. Christ is the pattern of their calling and their commission; as he washed the feet of his disciples, so they must wash the feet of others

In the first half of the service - the Liturgy of the Word - the deacon proclaims the Gospel, which is the good news of Jesus Christ, so making Christ known. Then comes the very simple and practical part.

Servants have to set the table. In Downton some of the most thrilling scenes are the preparations for great banquets. As the music plays lines of footmen dress the table with layers of linen, piled high with china, silverware, and crystal glass. Then the feast is brought out and laid before those called to the supper.

In just the same way a deacon sets the altar ready for the Supper of the Lamb, Holy Communion. The corporal is laid out on top of the altar linen to catch any crumbs or droplets that might fall, a bit like a placemat. Then the paten is placed on top with the Priest's Host (main wafer) on it, just like a plate with the main course. Next the chalice is filled with wine and a drop of water to symbolise the mixture of water and wine that flowed from the side of Christ when he was pierced on the cross. This also points us to the dual nature of Jesus, his divinity and humanity. Purificators are placed next to the corporal just like a napkin.

At the end of the supper, the servants have to wash up. We believe that in Holy Communion the bread and wine become to us the body and bloody of Christ. This makes it extremely precious, and by the canons (rules) of the Church of England they must be consumed reverently. So the deacon with the help of the sub-deacon has to consume what's left. This is an opportunity to remember why we came and who we have met in Holy Communion. We don't rush off the remains as if they were an inconvenient side note. The ablutions are an excellent opportunity to pray in silence and offer oneself to God privately. To remind oneself just how precious his presence with us is.

At the end of the Eucharist the deacon sends the equipped people of God out to love and serve the Lord. If I were to really stretch the Downton analogy this is a bit like brandy and cigars followed by carriages at eleven...

Fr. Max Bayliss

On a musical note.....



Epiphany, The Lamb and so much more

The new term started with a busy choir practice on Friday the 6th with four choir carols to prepare for the Epiphany celebrations. Sunday morning's anthem was the delightful setting of "Tomorrow shall be my dancing day" by John Gardner, which the choir first sang about 3 years ago. It was composed for the choir of St Paul's Girls School, where Gardner was Director of Music, following in the footsteps of Gustav Holst and Herbert Howells. It's a bit of a Marmite piece – with its sudden changes in time signature and full-bodied harmonies, you either love it or hate it; no half-way house!

In the evening we sang three carols for the Epiphany Procession, Peter Warlock's Bethlehem Down, the Cornelius "Three Kings" (with Alan on the baritone solo) and Herbert Howells's "Here is the little door". The words of this last carol are taken from a poem attributed to G.K. Chesterton, although some believe it was written by his wife, Frances. It is one of Howells's early choral works, composed when he was still in his twenties.

One of the themes for Parish Eucharist on 15th January was *Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world*. We only need the slightest of excuses to bring out John Tavener's wonderful setting of William Blake's great poem "The Lamb". Tavener himself said "I wrote *The Lamb* in 1982 while being driven by my mother from South Devon to London. It came to me fully grown so to speak, so all I had to do was to write it down. It was inspired by Blake and by my three-year-old nephew, Simon." The work is often studied at both GCSE and A levels.

For much of his life Tavener was an Orthodox Christian, although he once described religions as being "as senile as one another." On the other hand, he wrote "I wanted to produce music that was the sound of God. That's what I have always tried to do."

The anthem for 22nd January was "Beati quorum via", the second of Stanford's well-known group of three motets, an old favourite and, if truth be told, probably over done at All Saints. (Ouch - I can hear a number of choir members shouting in my ear that it's impossible to sing this piece too often – perhaps they are right.)

Looking forward, 5th February (Candlemas) is an opportunity for the Head Chorister to sing Geoffrey Burgon's haunting setting of the Nunc Dimittis (the theme music to "Tinker, tailor, soldier, spy"). Also, we are learning two new settings of the Evening Canticles to sing at Evensong on 5th and 19th February. The 5th February canticles see a step back to the late 16th century with Thomas Morley's fauxbourdon (here the "melody" is in the tenor line); on the 19th February we hope to sing Orlando Gibbons's Short Service. Finally, the 9.15 service on 26th February is an appropriate occasion to sing Bob Chilcott's lovely setting of "Be thou my vision" for Soprano solo, SATB and piano, a great favourite with the trebles.

Finally: Well done to Carl Moulding, who gave a great performance of one of his own compositions as a final voluntary at the end of the morning service on 22nd January.

Paul Dickens

Calendar of Events

1st February:

Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm. Tickets £5.00 available from the Coffee Shop.

Baptism Preparation Evening All Saints 8pm

4th February:

SLAPs present Robin Hood Pantomime St. Leonard's Church Hall 2pm & 7.30. Booking essential. Contact Neil Forsyth 01525 377047.

Adults £7.00, children £4.50



5th February:

Candlemas Services as usual at All Saints including Messy Mass 11.15am

New Beginnings Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm

8th February:

Coffee Shop AGM All Saints 8pm

10th February:

Bible Book Club 7 pm, in the Jim Chesterfield Room behind St Barnabas Church Hall. Discussing the Song of Solomon (also called the Song of Songs) and Ecclesiastes.

11th February:

Eggington Quiz Evening with Andy Tourney in Eggington Village Hall. Details from Angela Dyer, 01525 210420.

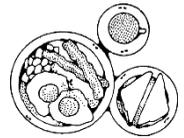
14th February:

Mothers' Union AGM All Saints 8pm

25th February: Men's Big Breakfast 8.30am in St Leonard's Church Hall.

Contact Neil Forsyth 01525 377047 for details and to book a place.

No charge but donations appreciated.



"The Amorous Ambassador" A DVD evening showing of the SLAPs play of 2006. St Leonard's Church Hall at 7.30pm. Free entry, bring your own drinks and nibbles.

Music from the Movies A concert in aid of Citizens Advice at All Saints, 7.30pm

Tickets £12.00 (including a glass of wine) accompanying children free, available from the Parish Office.

28th February:

Jars of Hope 'Crêpes' Evening All Saints 7.30pm.

Tickets £10.00 available from the Parish Office.



4th March:

50/50 Auction St. Leonard's Church Hall 1pm onwards. Free entry, bidding cards £1.00

Lent at All Saints 2017

The 8.00am Holy Communion homilies at All Saints, will be based on Living God's Love themes found in the diocesan Lent Course and will be followed up with a weekly House Group led by Fr Max, open to all.

The 9.15am Parish Eucharist will focus on prominent Anglican hymn writers who have written some of our most popular hymnody.

5th March

8.00am Living God's Love with Generosity

9.15am George Herbert

12th March

8.00am Living God's Love with Joy

9.15am Charles Wesley

19th March

8.00am Living God's Love with Imagination

9.15 am The Olney Hymn Writers

26th March

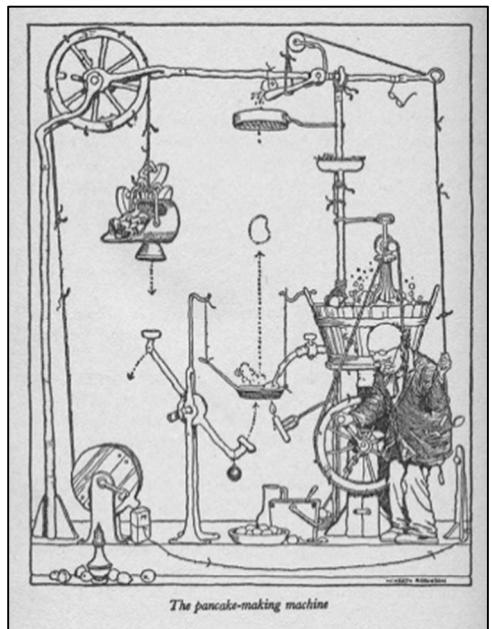
8.00am Living God's Love with Courage

9.15am Mrs Alexander

2nd April

8.00am Living God's Love for the Sake of the World

9.15am J.M. Neale



Spotlight on....

Crafty Natter



Craft has become popular again recently. Look at the number of magazines in W H Smith, browse in hobby shops or watch TV shopping channels and you can obtain almost any craft item on the internet.

Churches have regularly held women's sewing and knitting sessions - during my 40 years of attending All Saints church, I have known of four groups. In the world wars, churches extended their craft groups to form the backbone of caring, which included ideas for home and forces' use.

The idea of a new craft group in All Saints had been floating around for a while - a craft session, open to all, once a month to support Mothers' Union projects and other worthy causes. But as is often the case, nothing was done.

However we were enthused again by a sad happening. Many people will remember Joyce Lathwell who died three years ago. She had been a staunch member of the MU for about 60 years, first belonging to the branch at St Andrew's church and then our re-opened branch at All Saints. She was keen on knitting, sewing and craft projects.

After her death and whilst helping her husband, George, to tidy the house, her daughters Stacey and Sally found many part completed items, especially knitting. So we now had some ready-made ideas, to finish Joyce's work. The first meeting of Crafty Natter took place on her birthday in March 2014.

We have made teddies for baptism families, and figures for the Advent travelling crib along with its many, many sheep! In October we make Christmas cards for prison chaplains to distribute; we assemble memory books for care homes and we make "Cross in a Pocket" for the church's bereavement visitors to give away. An interesting project has been making up toilet bags for emergency hospital admissions and detention centres. Ongoing knitting is for neonatal units and children's hats and jumpers. The two church fayres are supported by selling some items on a stall.

We meet on the third Friday in the month, at 1.30pm in the north transept. We can bring our own craft to do if we chose, but there is a programme of ideas for each month. The coffee shop is open and provides us with refreshment. We usually finish by 3.30pm. The next two meetings of Crafty Natter are 17 March and 21 April.

So come along to meet us and engage in something practical and useful. Or just come for the natter!

Rosemary Warburton

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney
Tel: 01525 237633***

***Churchwardens:
Julia Dickens 210210
Nerissa Walters 371615***



The end of an era:



At the very end of December, I received an email from guitarist Roger Spalding. Roger had already hinted that he might have to move away, at least temporarily, so I opened this with some trepidation. Hoping that perhaps he was just wishing me a happy new year, and the rest was a bad dream, it was with great sadness - and considerable consternation – that I read that he really is moving.

Roger has been a stalwart member of our family service band for more years than any of us cares to remember. And for the past 5 years or so, he has taken on responsibility for choosing what is played and sung, and ensuring that all the musicians have the right dots, in the right keys, on their music stands. We will truly miss his support of our worship.



Worse was to come: in the flurry of e-mails that followed, Jim Meager revealed that he too will have to retire. I think he has played here, on and off, for even longer than Roger, as he was part of a peripatetic group which toured the village churches way back in about 1990 with Daff Billinghurst and Pam Cross.

It is very hard to put into words quite what these two friends have bought to Hockliffe over these decades, and nothing I say will ever adequately capture the contributions they have made to our worship, but believe me when I say we really have appreciated it; and will miss them both.

They have brought music – of course they have. They have exposed us to musical genres we would never have met otherwise; they have supported young musicians and encouraged them; they have taught us new and exciting songs. But they both also have a strength of spiritual awareness, and ability to use the music to enhance the teaching. And above all, they have brought friendship. The band has been a little enclave all of its own. The musicians have their in-jokes, and chatty companionship. And supported each other, working together to bring joy and enlightenment. And then they pass that sense of well-being to the rest of us.

I know that Roger and Jim will continue to be hugely busy in many fields, but sincerely hope that their ministry of music continue for many years to come.

Julia Dickens

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Tel: 01525 237633***

***Churchwardens:
Carol Hart 384634***



Happy New Year to everyone. I have been asked to take over the writing of the St. Michael's news page for Saints Alive and I hope I am going to be assisted by Father Noel and Carol with thoughts and ideas.

We were all very sad to say goodbye to Paula Smith. She and Jennifer are moving to Sussex to be nearer to their families. They have lived in the village for about 25 years, and will be very sadly missed.



Paula has been one of our Church Wardens for about 10 years and apart from the duties that go with the job she has created our wild flower garden in the churchyard and done a lot of work on cutting back the hedges and dealing with the general maintenance. She also raised a lot of money for us by taking part in the Annual Beds & Herts. Churches bike ride. She has been an integral part of the village and is seen daily riding her horses. Jennifer created and maintained the Garden of Remembrance and also organised our annual plant sale up until the last couple of years when it got a bit too much for her. It used to be a lovely social occasion as well as raising much need funds.

Working on the wild flower garden, Paula decided that she needed a long handled scythe as the grass was too long to cut by mower at the end of the season. So she enrolled in scything classes and the PCC and St. Albans Diocese purchased a scythe for the purpose. When she knew she was moving she asked if she could purchase the scythe. We had made a collection for her leaving present and decided to give her the scythe as part of the gift together with some lovely crystal wine glasses.

The presentation was held after the Christingle service on Christmas Eve. All the parents and children were there and Carol had dressed them in their nativity outfits. Mike Finney did a very happy service and the church looked lovely with the lights turned down and all the children holding their Christingle candles. (Thanks to Carol Hart our other church warden for all her hard work).

Carol said a few words of farewell and thanks to Paula, and then I brought out the scythe from the vestry where Paula had left it for me, all cleaned up and with ribbons on it! As I carried it towards Paula, Carol remarked that I looked like Old Father Time! Mike Finney agreed and there was much frivolity all around. Paula was very pleased but sad to be leaving us.

Our next event is a Quiz Evening with Andy Tourney, to be held in our village hall on Saturday 11th February. Food provided, bring your own drinks. If you would like to book a table, or just a place please let me know. My number is 01525 210420



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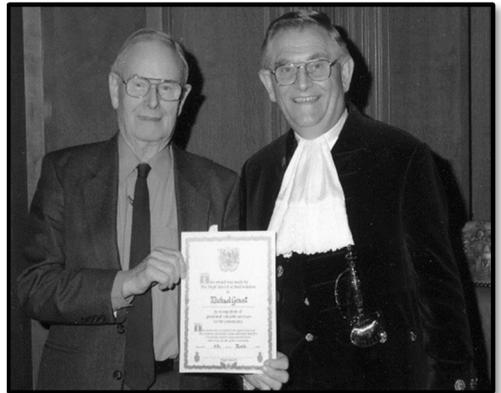
Julia Haviland 850380



The most exciting news to hit Billington this year is the announcement that Michael Grant has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours list. Many of us in the village have muttered under our breath "and about time too". This article is necessarily too short to list all that Michael has done to earn this award but here briefly are a few reasons.

1. Chairman of Billington Parish Council;
2. Member of Billington Parish Council;
3. Church warden for St Michael and All Angels;
4. Long-time member of PCC;
5. Leader of P3 group in village, maintaining footpaths, hedges, styles etc.;
6. Member of U3A and starting up the popular Old Glory group in the village hall;
7. Organising the buying and planting of daffodils on the verges through the village;
8. Helping in the maintenance of church and churchyard;
9. Faithful assistance in services at St Michael and All Angels and organising the Winter Walk;
10. Organising popular holidays of extreme interest for many people.

All we can say is THANK YOU Michael for your tireless and loving service.

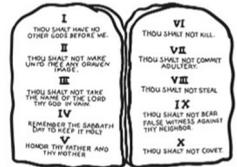


After a very busy Christmas festival for Fr Paul and Helen, they moved to Snettisham after Paul's last service at the Church of the Good Shepherd on 8th January. His final service at St Michael and All Angels was at midnight on Christmas Eve but it was after the Carol Service on Sunday 22nd December that we were able to bid farewell to Paul and Helen formally. Geoff Haviland had made for them a unique and beautiful cross of burred oak and Geoff was able to describe to them and the congregation the significance of the carving. Paul and Helen were delighted with this and also for tokens towards their new home. Paul will be licensed in the new Parish on Sunday 29th January.

Sandra Brewin

The Ten Commandments

explored in a monthly series



You shall have no other gods before me.

The 1st Commandment discussed by Molly Bowerman

This is the first of a series of articles concerning the Ten Commandments. I drew the short straw for the first one.

I can remember them all, (although not necessarily in the right order!) for many years ago I had to learn them by wrote in my confirmation class. I also went to the village church school until I was eleven and the commandments were part of our religious education in those days. Perhaps I did not realise at the time but they are God's laws - God's laws for life.

The Ten Commandments (also known from the Greek, as the Decalogue) appear in two slightly different versions in the Old Testament. According to Exodus ch.19 they were written by God on tablets of stone and delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai. Moses smashes them in anger when he discovers the Israelites worshipping a golden calf. The laws are then re-written by God, and this divine authorship gives the collection a unique authority and each one will be discussed over the coming months.

The First commandment:

God says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:1-3) He is promising his love to us above all else. Perhaps we, as Christians, can interpret it as: 'I am the Lord who brought you out of the realm of sin and death, through the death of my son.'

The first part in our response to God is the promise to stay faithful and forsake all other gods. He is the God who has rescued us so we have no other gods before him, no competing loyalties. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other." (Isaiah 45:22) In (Jeremiah chapter 2:13) the Lord declares: "My people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me and the spring of living water and have dug their own systems, broken systems that cannot hold water."

The people have forsaken their God and followed other gods instead; they have worshipped Baal; they have exchanged their glorious God for worthless idols. God had brought the Israelites into a relationship with him; he would be their God and they would be his people. He wants them to reflect his character, his truth, and his holiness in all their life.

The commandments, of course, are very important in the Jewish faith. They are the rules for life. In fact, the Mezuzah which is a case attached to many Jewish doorposts holds a parchment scroll containing scriptural texts including quite often the first commandment.

For Christians today, the New Testament tells us that God has brought us out of the kingdom of darkness. He has rescued us from the slavery of sin and Satan, so that he can bring us to himself.

(Colossians 1:13-14): “He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

(Galatians 4:4-6): “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his son, born of a woman, born under the law in order to redeem those who were under the law.”

Obedying God’s law is how the Israelites became God’s people and how they should live because they are God’s people. But to stay in that relationship they had to make a Covenant. That’s the privileged position that Israel had and that privilege is now true for Christians. Peter said of those who trust in Jesus: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy; but now you have received mercy.” (4 Peter 2:9-10)

It is very clear that God is the only true God, the one who created the world. “I am God and there is no other.” (Isaiah 45 vs 22). In Corinthians, Paul says, “There is no God but one. Indeed, even though there may be so called God’s in heaven or on Earth, yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

YOU SHALL
HAVE NO
OTHER GODS
BEFORE ME

There were in those times nations around Israel where many different gods were worshipped. Some of the most famous were Baal and Astoreth. They were all thought to have their own expertise, such as the God of weather, and fertility etc. Sometimes there was a desire to two-time God, perhaps, when faced with a bad harvest, to look elsewhere for help and blessing, or even abandon God and follow one of these other gods all together. And so God says “You have no other God but me.”

There is also a second meaning - it shows us how to love. Jesus was asked which commandment was first of all. He replied, “The first is, ‘Hear o Israel; the Lord our God, the Lord is one, you shall love your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’” But then Jesus says, “The second commandment is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There are no other commandments greater then these.” (Mark 12:29-31) The parable of the Good Samaritan shows us the meaning of the word love.

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Interregnum

Churchwardens:

Chris Myers

Stuart Lay



January 8th 2017 the last Sunday of Paul Niemiec at the above church. I had been once and Sarah not at all so we went to celebrate with the congregation and Paul and Helen. It was a far from sad occasion, the hymns were joyful the people joined in with the praise and Paul led in his own style.

A lot of people and a lot of children but I heard every word of the service, I could also read it on the screen, when a big head did not get in the way. At one point Paul called for quiet and got it. A three piece band played for the singing and a trio of singers led the worship. It was a joyous event.

Several people came to us before the start of the service and welcomed us and we spoke to people after the service. All this came about because Paul and Helen opened their house to a house group, a mother and toddler group and a messy church, and their hearts to God's calling.



The school hall became a place of worship, a table with some sheep on it and a cross the altar and God was truly worshipped in that place, and when the children joined Paul at the front, near the end, and we sang "Our God is a great big God", with actions, it was really moving.

Paul and Helen will be missed but Jesus is still the leader of the Church of the Good Shepherd and I am sure it will go from strength to strength. We must pray for it, its members, its PCC and for all who will be part of the church in the coming years. And if you would like a joy injection or a happiness transplant go along on a Sunday at 9:45, you will get a wonderful welcome.

Ian Woodward

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