

**Ministry Team Letter**

Dear Friends,

Happy Christmas! Yes, I do know you may be reading this in the New Year, but Christmas is traditionally a twelve-day festival that begins on 25 December and ends at Epiphany – or Twelfth Night – on 6 January. In Japan – where, as I may just have mentioned before, we used to live – there is no official Christmas holiday since it is a predominantly Buddhist and Shintoist nation, but in December many shops and some homes do sprout Santas and reindeer, and piped carols can be heard in supermarkets. So it's just like here in that respect. However, all of this is swept away on the 25<sup>th</sup> itself, because the actual festival has little meaning for the largely non-Christian Japanese. In our church in Nagasaki we had a large Christmas tree put up outside where it was visible to passers-by, and I used to make a point of leaving it there until 6 January. Occasionally, people would ask why I had forgotten to put it away, which would give me an opportunity to explain that the church was still celebrating Christmas.

In Japan, New Year is the major festival of the year and has something of the same significance and feel as our Christmas. Before midnight people gather in the temple grounds to take turns tolling the single huge bell, which is symbolic of ringing out the sins of the past year and ringing in blessings for the new. Simple meals will be served and prayers will be offered. After midnight, huge crowds surge into the shrines to make offerings and buy lucky charms. Then the first few

days of the year will be spent with the family, eating certain celebratory meals that appear only at that time. The Church has generally not made much of the New Year as a festival, but 1 January is in fact the feast day of the Naming of Jesus. The name Jesus means 'God saves', and in a sense the Church claims the start of the year for Jesus, the one who saves or rescues us from the darkness that always threatens to engulf our existence.

Just as it is good for the Church to try to reclaim Advent as a season in its own right that means something more than 'the run-up to Christmas', so I feel we would benefit from remembering that Christmas extends into the New Year. It is while we are still celebrating the birth of our Saviour that a new *Anus Domini*, Year of our Lord, is born. This new year of 2007 AD represents, after all, the number of years, approximately, since the birth of Jesus. If we remember that, then the hopes and fears that accompany the start of a new year can be seen in the light of God's incarnation, which is the Christmas revelation that the source of our being and the ground of our hope is here and now with us and within us in a form we can recognise and embrace. In other words, allowing Christmas to spill over, as it were, into the New Year would help us see that all of the year, all of time itself, and not just the special seasons, is lit up from within by the light of Christ. With this faith, we can face 2007, or any other year, with the courage that comes from knowing that no matter what the year may bring God is with us and therefore nothing that is good and no human soul will in the end be lost.

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May God's peace and blessing be with us all, this year and always. Happy New Year!

With love,  
*David*

### **Our advertisers**

We would like to thank all those who are advertising in our magazine in 2007 – both those who are new and those who have supported us over many years. We commend their services to all our readers.

### **Mothers' Union**

At the December meeting we invited members from other branches in the deanery to come and join us for entertainment and refreshments. This year we had decided to put on a short play entitled *Joe Carpenter and Son*. Daphne Meats, who had produced this last year for another group of ladies, offered to produce it for us. The play is an English Nativity story and it invites a lot of audience participation. We were all set when 'Mary' said she had to go to a funeral. 'No problem,' we said, 'Let the king be Mary and one of the stage managers can be the king.' We rehearsed like this and all was well. The day before the event, however, 'Mary number two' rang Daphne to say that she had to go off to see a very sick father-in-law. This left us with a slight problem! It was decided that one of the shepherds would have to be Mary as well. The shepherd was also an angel so it would involve a lot of very fast changes. Daphne said in her introduction that it was really unfortunate to lose two virgins so quickly but that we were going to improvise. The audience

were fantastic and joined in with great gusto. The cast were brilliant at helping with the quick changes and it all went very well. Everyone enjoyed a well-earned cup of tea and a cake or two afterwards and it was a very rewarding ending to a busy year.

Our next meeting will take place at the Queen Elizabeth School Hall at 2 pm on Tuesday 2 January when Elizabeth Sanville will talk about volunteering at Littlehey Prison Visitor Centre.

*Jean Morgan*

### **Wives' Group**

The Wives' Group Christmas Party is usually a very jolly affair and this year was no exception. Our charity for the year was the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association and we welcomed Ruth and Arthur from the St Neots branch, along with Ivan, their delightful black labrador. Ivan used to be a guide dog but is now enjoying a well-earned retirement with Ruth and Arthur. We were also pleased to see Maggie Gillett again; earlier in the year, Maggie and Lyric, her guide dog puppy in training had given us a delightful evening telling us about the work entailed in training a puppy. Lyric has now moved on. but Maggie now has another puppy in training, this one named Norris. During the course of the year we raised £350 for the Association and presented a cheque; some of the money will go towards sponsoring another puppy and we are all looking forward to hearing progress reports on 'our' puppy!

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After the formalities we played party games – Liz Morgan won the Pass the Parcel; there were also hilarious games of drawing song titles and an old parlour game called ‘The Vicar's Cat,’ involving descriptions (some more lurid than others) of the unfortunate animal. I don't know whether David and Yoko have a cat, but if they do, I suggest it keeps a low profile for the next few weeks...

We then shared a bite to eat and finished in the usual way with dips into the Secret Santa Bran Tub and singing a few carols while Dorothy Groves played the piano to keep us in tune; thank you, Dorothy. The Wives' Group have had their party; Christmas has officially begun!

Next year's programme has still to be finalised, but we are having a fun start to the year with a Beetle Drive on 9 January 2007. All are welcome.

*Kate Robinson*

### **Men's Social Group**

The social aspect of our constitution was very much to the fore at our annual dinner held at Fawcett Towers early in December. (Fortunately neither Basil nor Sybil was at home! ). It was a most enjoyable evening with good food, good fellowship and plenty of erudite discussion. The topics ranged from the use of expert witnesses in criminal trials to the standard of driving on the A14 – all good manly stuff. Thank you, Andrew and Mary, for your hospitality and for all your efforts in making it such a pleasant

evening. In fact we so much enjoyed ourselves that we might well consider making it a biannual event!

*Peter Dawe*

### **Charity of the month Church Army**

Our charity for January is the Church Army, an organisation founded in 1882 by Wilson Carlisle, who believed very much that the Christian message had to be shared through words and action. Today Evangelists are licensed to operate within the Anglican system by the individual diocesan bishops within the UK and Ireland. Her Majesty the Queen is the patron of the Church Army.

Their mission remains the same as it was 125 years ago – to reach the least, the last and the lost with the life-changing, transforming love of Jesus Christ.

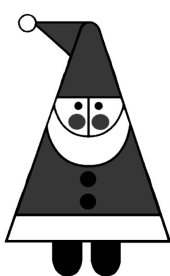
Church Army International established in 2006 is an association of eight independent Church Army societies around the world (Africa, Australia, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Ireland, and the United States of America) working in over fifteen countries. The purpose is to facilitate communication, co-operation, fellowship and shared vision between Church Army societies, and to promote the growth of Church Army ministry worldwide.

*BizzThackray*

**From our new interim churchwarden**

Thank you for voting me in as interim churchwarden until next April. I will do my best to follow the shoes of our dear Penny and am looking forward to working alongside David Ferris in assisting David Busk, our Ministry team and our congregation.

*Robert Hurd*

**CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR GOOD CAUSES**

*Many of you reading this magazine will have taken advantage of the Cards for Good Causes that went on sale in Huntingdon's All Saints Church in the lead up to Christmas. The following article first appeared in The Quartet, the magazine of Little Bowden, Lubenham and Market Harborough churches in Leicestershire, and is reproduced with their permission.*

Cards for Good Causes is an excellent way to support your charity – 81p in the pound is the minimum that Cards for Good Causes gives back to charities for every card sold. (From this, of course, the charities have to pay for the production and distribution of their cards and any VAT.) It also gives customers the chance to browse through all the cards in the comfort of a church.

In 2005, nationally, over 300 charities received £5 million from Cards for Good Causes for their Christmas card sales. This is an important source of funding for the charities.

*Cards for Good Causes Limited* is the trading company of The 1959 Group of Charities (Registered Charity No. 249030). The 1959 Group of Charities is a non-profit multi-charity organisation.

The charities represented in 2006 were: Arthritis Research Campaign, Barnardos, British Heart Foundation, British Red Cross, Cancer Research UK, CARE, Christian Aid/Traidcraft, Cystic Fibrosis Trust, Diabetes UK, Epilepsy Action, Help the Aged, Leukaemia Research, MacMillan Cancer Support, Mencap, Mind, Motor Neurone Disease Association, Multiple Sclerosis Society, National Autistic Society, NCH, NSPCC, Perennial Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society, Queen Elizabeth's Foundation, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Samaritans, Save the Children, Shelter, SSAFA Forces help, The Children's Society, The Home Farm Trust, The National Deaf Children's Society, The Stroke Association.

The success of the scheme depends on local centres being able to recruit enough volunteers to sell the cards. If you were one of them, thank you.

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*Mary Dawe thought this extract might help you with your catering!*

### The Five-All\* Laugh-a-long

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me,  
'I've bought a big fresh turkey and a proper Christmas tree.'

On the second day of Christmas much  
laughter could be heard  
As we tucked into our turkey, a most  
delicious bird.

On the ninth day of Christmas, by  
lunchtime, dad was blotto –  
He knew the bird was back again, this  
time as a risotto.

On the third day of Christmas came  
people from next door;  
The turkey tasted just as good as it had  
the day before.

On the tenth day of Christmas we were  
drinking home-made brew,  
As if that wasn't bad enough we were  
served with turkey stew.

On the fourth day of Christmas came  
relations young and old,  
We finished up the Christmas pud and ate  
the turkey cold.

On the eleventh day of Christmas the  
Christmas tree was moulting –  
With chilli, soy and oyster sauce the  
turkey was revolting.

On the fifth day of Christmas outside the  
snowflakes scurried,  
But it was nice and warm inside – we had  
the turkey curried.

On the twelfth day of Christmas we had  
smiles upon our lips –  
The guests had gone, the turkey too and  
we dined on fish and chips.

On the sixth day of Christmas the  
Christmas spirit died;  
The children fought and bickered – we  
had turkey rissoles, fried.

*'Five all' is the village/parish magazine  
published monthly for Cotterstock,  
Fotheringhay, Southwick, Tansor and  
Warmington.*

On the seventh day of Christmas my true  
love he did wince  
When he sat down at the table and was  
offered turkey mince.

On the eighth day of Christmas the dog  
had run for shelter –  
He'd seen our turkey pancakes and the  
glass of Alka Seltzer.

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### Church encourages members to 'learn lessons for life' in practical prayer guide \*\*

The Church of England is using clips from hit films *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *Dead Man Walking*, and *Truly, Madly, Deeply* in a bid to boost the nation's prayer life, through a new resource aimed at small study groups. The clips are suggested as ways of beginning discussions about how God acts in the world, about genuine listening, and about the nature of human relationships.

Life Source, published as an ideal course for Lent study groups, will encourage members to 'discover a new found joy and delight in prayer' by examining major aspects of a balanced prayer life, founded on the idea of prayer as relationship with God.



### 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, Origen, 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.

*Elizabeth Goodridge and Ian Yearsley of Southwark Diocese consider the major challenges of climate change and rising debt...*

### January 2007 – The Storm Clouds Gather \*\*

Those who wish to follow Christ in 2007 must face and consider some serious issues. We shall be looking at two of the most serious: climate change and debt, over the coming year. Both have deep biblical roots, both take us to the very

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nature of God and his purposes for his people and his created universe.

Climate change surrounds us. Despite efforts by some industrial and political groups to rubbish the idea, the reality of climate change is now being recognised, along with the facts that this earth's inhabitants are responsible for it, and that drastic measures will be needed to avoid it becoming a global disaster.

For this is not like some natural disaster where we can reflect on what our faith means when good people suffer bad things. Climate change is the result of the lifestyle of the affluent West and humanity's squandering of God's gifts for more than a century. Putting things right will take more than low-energy light bulbs or double-glazing.

Yet we need to see this in the light of God's love for his people and his creation. It is a love that provides generously for all to live in community with God, something expressed by the word 'shalom'. But it is also a love that judges those who seek to appropriate wealth for themselves instead of sharing it. The riches of the world are provided for all to enjoy, not for a few to squander.

From now until June we shall look at this problem, the measures needed to tackle it, and what all this tells us about the God we worship. Then we shall look at debt: individual, national and global; does it reflect the generosity of God or the greed of humankind? Are these concerns of Christian faith? Yes, if you take discipleship seriously.

### **St Paul's New Year resolution – for you \*\***

Do you ever wonder what St Paul would have wanted for you this coming year? His letters to the Thessalonians give us a good idea.

Paul was writing to the young Christians of Thessalonica. He had led them to faith in Jesus while he and Silas had been in Greece during Paul's second great missionary journey.

By the time Paul and Silas left Thessalonica, the little group of converts had become the fledgling church in Thessalonica, and very dear to Paul indeed. He thanks God for them as his 'joy and crown'.

And so now, separated by long miles, he sends them his heart's desire for them:

*'Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you ... to do this more and more ...'*

(1 Thessalonians 4:1)

One of the great things about our loving heavenly Father is his unconditional love for us, and his delight in us, whatever our level of attainment. He is pleased by our progress, however small it may be. Paul would say that we can please the Father this year by bringing certain areas of our lives even more under his control.

Top of the list is to live a life of purity, and to grow in our 'sanctification' – which is a theological word that means

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simply letting the Holy Spirit transform our negative, unworthy behaviour patterns into patterns of holy behaviour. His long-term aim is to make us Christ-like. And as part of this, Paul urges us to do more acts of love for others.

Some of us will try and get more physically fit this year, but Paul says we need to be more and more *spiritually fit*. It may be good to lose pounds, but Paul urges you to GAIN – spiritually. Here is one area of life in which we can never gain too much!

In 2007, a resolution to please God will glorify him, and *that* makes a difference for eternity.

### **Are you caught in the tiredness trap? \***

*Feeling constantly tired is far too common. Here are some causes...*

#### **Too much stress**

Dealing with constant hassle will keep you in such a state of arousal that your body will never get the chance to relax. Your ability to ‘control’ a situation will also determine whether you find it stressful or not. Are you feeling out of control? If your thoughts are constantly full of phrases such as: ‘I must’, ‘I should’, then beware.

#### **Just not enough time**

Are you tired because you think there is simply not enough time to do all that you need to do? That could be your

upbringing and experiences conditioning you. Did you have anxious parents? Did you have parents who were very critical? You may be left with low self-esteem, and constantly be trying to prove yourself, setting yourself impossibly high standards.

#### **Too much time**

Or are you tired because you have no goals and feel a bit adrift? Without any challenges, you will become apathetic, tempted to overeat, easily upset by petty things. It is time to reassess your life – and choose some objectives!

#### **People need me 24 hours a day**

No, they don’t. They may WANT you there, to dump their problems on, but leaning on you will not help them to grow. Define your boundaries with other people – you are NOT responsible for their lives – they are. Protect yourself from clinging plants – ivy can kill an oak tree, given time! Also, beware ‘negative’ friends – negativity is infectious.

Beware the A type personality! You know them – impossibly demanding of themselves – and you. They have a NEED to drive themselves – and others – into the ground. That is their agenda, not yours. Let God set your agenda in life.

So – with 2007 stretching ahead, don’t be a hamster – jumping on your wheel each day and running in a frenzy. You won’t get anywhere! If you doubt that, think back to this time last year – were you stressed and running flat out then? Why didn’t you reach your objectives within the past year?

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This January, step back and look at your life. Ask God to help you see what it should look like by the end of the year. What do you really need to achieve? What can you let go? List the changes needed to achieve your goal, and start working on them.

### **Where Christianity meets culture\*\***

*For those of you who enjoy the Internet!*

You are a Christian and you read the news – now you can discuss its implications for your faith with other Christians. The Interface website (<http://www.theinterface.org.uk>) is a new initiative of the Methodist Interface Group, a group that explores contemporary issues from a faith-based perspective. The site was created with the aim of providing a friendly space for Methodists and others to discuss hot news topics and their implications for our faith.

A couple of new articles of 300 to 500 words are posted on the site every week, covering a range of topics; from the new album by *The Streets* to stem cell research. The contributors are people who are very knowledgeable about a given field or who simply have a strong interest in a particular issue. So why wait. Get involved with the conversation!

### **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity\*\***

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is a worldwide movement of Christians of many denominations, languages, races and cultures, who are engaged in praying and working for the unity of Christians in

the service of the wider redemption, unity and peace of all peoples.

Every year the dates are the same, 18 to 25 January, regardless of the days of the week. Praying for unity does not involve prayer for any specific schemes for unity. It is about being faithful to the prayer of Jesus Christ, as seen in John 17, 'that they may be one'. The verse chosen for 2007 is: 'He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak.' The Bible reading is Mark 7:31-37.

Details about our local Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be found in the *Newsletter* nearer the time.

*O Lord, you have brought all your faithful people into a single, universal family, stretching across heaven and earth. Bind us together with a spiritual love which is stronger than any human love, that in serving one another we may neither count the cost nor seek reward, but think only of the common good.*

Mozarabic Sacramentary 3rd century

\*\* Articles taken from *The Parish Pump* the Church News Service.

### **And finally ...**

'Tis the season to be jolly ...'. And jolly grateful, as far as the *Parish News* is concerned. Many thanks to all our advertisers, contributors, subscribers and the staff in the Parish Office for making it all possible in 2006. A very happy New Year to you all from the editorial team.

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**Lent Concert**

**Forthcoming event.**

This year's traditional Lent Concert will be on Saturday 10 March at 7.30 pm, when choirs and singers from the Huntingdon area will sing .....More details will follow in Newsletter nearer the time.

**The Registers**

**Baptisms**

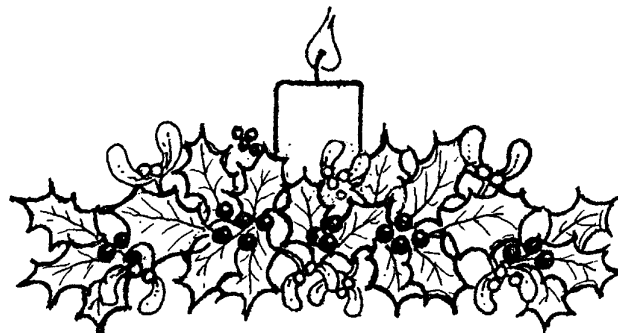
10 December Daisy Lou Bright  
10 December Morgan James Liddle

**Funerals**

28 November Frederick Jarrod  
29 November Alan Groves  
12 December Hilda Gullen

**The Lectionary**

7 January **Epiphany 1**  
Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12  
14 January **Epiphany 2**  
Isaiah 62:1-5; John 2:1-11  
21 January **Epiphany 3**  
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a; Luke 4:14-21  
28 January **Candlemas**  
Malachi 3:1-5; Luke 2:22-40



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### Dates for your Diary

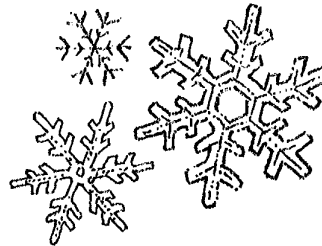
#### January

Tue	2	2.15 pm	Mothers' Union (Queen Elizabeth School)
Thu	4	9.30 am	St Mary's 0s-5s (Comrades Club)
		9.45 am	Holy Communion
Fri	5	7.30 pm	Men's Social Group dismantle Christmas tree
		7.30 pm	<i>No Choir practice</i>
Sat	6	8.00 am	Huntingdon Churches Together Men's Breakfast (The Barley Mow, Hartford) Speaker: the Revd David Busk
Sun	7	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist Children's Church and Vestry Group
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong
		6.45 pm	Youth Group (venue tba)
		8.00 pm	Children's Church Planning Meeting (Vicarage)
Mon	8	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones (Baptist Church Centre)
Tue	9	7.30 pm	Standing Committee Meeting of the PCC (Vicarage)
		8.00 pm	Wives' Group (Church Hall)
Wed	10	12.30 pm	Churches Together Ministers' Meeting (Vicarage)
Thu	11	9.30 am	St Mary's 0s-5s (Comrades Club)
Thu	11	9.45 am	Holy Communion
Fri	12	7.30 pm	Choir Party
Sun	14	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist Children's Church and Vestry Group
		11.30 am	Grassroots and Baptism
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong
		6.45 pm	Youth Group – venue tba
Mon	15	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones (Baptist Church Centre)
Tue	16	7.30 pm	PCC meeting
Wed	17	11.00 am	Holy Communion (Woodley Court)
Thu	18 – Wed 25		Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (see appropriate <i>Newsletter</i> for further information)

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Thu	18	9.30 am	St Mary's 0s-5s (Comrades Club)
		9.45 am	Holy Communion
		10.30 am	Holy Communion (Oak Tree Court)
		7.30 pm	Prayer Group (36 Old Court Hall)
		8.00 pm	Communications Committee (Vicarage)
Fri	19	7.30 pm	Choir practice
Sun	21	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	Sung Eucharist
			Children's Church and Vestry Group
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong
		6.45 pm	Youth Group (venue tba)
Mon	22	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones (Baptist Church Centre)
Wed	24	9.45 am	Holy Communion (McCartney House)
Thu	25	9.30 am	St Mary's 0s-5s (Comrades Club)
		9.45 am	Holy Communion
Fri	26	7.30 pm	Choir practice
		8.00 pm	Choir AGM
Sun	28	8.00 am	Holy Communion
		9.45 am	All-age Eucharist
		6.30 pm	Sung Evensong
		6.45 pm	Youth Group (venue tba)
Mon	29	1.30 pm	Stepping Stones (Baptist Church Centre)
		7.30 pm	Worship Group (Vicarage)



**The Editorial Committee meeting** for the February magazine will be held on **Sunday, 21 January**. Would you please ensure that material is with one of the following by that date and if possible not later than Friday 19 January.

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