

**The Parish Magazine of
Whitchurch-on-Thames
and Whitchurch Hill**



February 2003

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**A Letter for February 2003
from the Reverend Father Peter Jefford**

Dear People of the Parish,

Each year I take a week out of my life and go into Retreat in my old Theological College and part of the discipline of the Retreat is that for the space of four days we are not allowed to speak to each other. Always when I come home, back to Oxford, I feel a great sense of peace and real refreshment.

It is from Our Lord that there comes this simple injunction and he said to his Apostle “Come away by yourselves to a desert place and rest awhile” for we are also told “that many were coming and going and they had no leisure, not even to eat”.

Today people are trying to find some peace in their lives and comfort in their souls by going on holiday, not to Marbella but to some remote place. It is said that they are encouraged to do so by watching such people as Ray Mears and Michael Palin being shown in remote and hostile places of nature on the television.

Indeed there are two words that are brim full of romance: one is the word wilderness, that place of the wild extreme; and the other is the word desert, that place that is deserted by man and also obvious means of comfort. Today such places are becoming the great new tourist attractions of this new millennium.

But long before the tourists got going there were two men who were called into the desert. John the Baptist, we are told, left home as soon as he was able to get out there to find his great purpose and mission there in the desert. He went to that wild place called Bethabara in the land of Jordan on the East Bank of the Jordan River. He had to learn about not just staying alive but about the real nature and meaning of his life, how best he might serve Almighty God.

The answer lay there in the desert, and so it was with his cousin, Our Lord.

We are told that once his baptism had taken place the Spirit drove him there into the wilderness, the desert, the place of emptiness, to learn about how to stay alive. And also how to fulfil his mission as the Son of God.

St. John tells us that even in the final springtime he went back to the wilderness to learn once more. This time in respect of the forthcoming passion and death.

Not far away on Wednesday, March 5th, there comes the very first day of another season of Lent. I do feel that because of the nature of events in this world at the present time that this for us should also be a time to go out there into the deserted place, to learn more about God and His Son.

To learn in humility more about ourselves and to pray for so many things that need our prayers at this time.

For this Lent is not just a challenge to us but also a great opportunity.

It may be that experiencing less, learning in truth ‘that less is more’, by means of our prayers and our real and humble devotions, Lent will be for all of us a time of real growth in our discipleship. The Parish needs it. The church needs it. And we need it.

May God bless you all.

With my best wishes to you all,
Peter Jefford



NOTICES FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Baptism

On Sunday, January 19th at St Mary’s, Georgia Elizabeth, the daughter of Damian and Emma Oke of 292 Overdown Road, Tilehurst.

((February Newsletter from Kevin))

PLEASE SLOW DOWN !

My old uncle has always liked fancy cars. For as long as I can remember he has enjoyed buying the biggest, shiniest, and most powerful car that he can afford.

He is also one of the most responsible drivers that I know. As a child I was once taken somewhere by him in his big shiny car, but was taken aback by his readiness to be overtaken by much smaller, less supercharged machines.

“Come on, Uncle Fred” I said, “You can easily give them what for in this thing”

He looked at me very carefully, and said something I have never forgotten.

“So what will you do, in the seconds that you save, each time you risk your life?”

Uncle Fred still likes his cars. He is still alive to drive them, even though he is now in his eighties. But in the years that have passed since he said those words to me, about 60,000 people (no misprint) have been killed in road accidents in this country alone.

That’s the equivalent of twenty 11th Septembers.

Why do we accept this intolerable massacre, every year, on our roads?

As one who knows about these things, very few things come close to the grief and loss associated with a road death, especially if that loss is a child or a young person.

We love our cars, and our government conspires with industry to make us dependant on them. Our employers demand ever more from us which in turn we pass to the machines we use in our work. Life becomes a game of juggling at speed.

As your minister, I say this with all my heart, and I hope you share this sentiment, that I never want to have to lead your community in grieving the loss of anyone who has been needlessly killed by a speeding car.

Please will YOU help me in this, by cutting your speed to 20mph through our village?

(Continued on page 6)

<h1>Englefield</h1> <p>Tel : 0118 9304898</p> <p><u>Open</u> : Mon-Sat 9-5pm (Sundays 10-4pm May & June)</p> <p>GARDEN CENTRE</p>	
<p><u>Mother's Day</u> <u>March 30th</u></p> <p>Planted baskets and bowls Gifts Pots and containers</p>	 <p>Primroses, pansies Fruit Trees Seed Potatoes Seeds Roses here from Mid Feb</p>
<p>Where we are We are 3 miles from junction 12 of the M4. Englefield village is signposted off the A340 Theale to Pangbourne road.</p>	<p>Who we are Englefield Garden Centre is part of TACT, a charity providing training & therapy to people with learning disabilities</p>

(Continued from page 5)

Think of others, think of the child around the corner, think of your own family.

I once had a child go under the front of my car in Bristol. The little boy ran out into the road without looking. If I had been going at thirty miles an hour he would have died at my hand and there would have been nothing I could have done. By a miracle he was unhurt, as I managed to stop before hitting him. But can you imagine my feelings as I saw him run out, and fall in front of me?

Many cars go through Whitchurch at forty miles an hour or more. This has got to stop, before someone is killed. Because if we allow things to continue, statistics say that a fatality is not a matter of if, but when. Who will it be, I wonder?

Your Team Rector, **Kevin Davies**

.....

Lent Lunches—volunteer host/hostesses please contact Wendy Ferguson on 984 1262 to go on the list of our ever-popular Souper Lent Lunches

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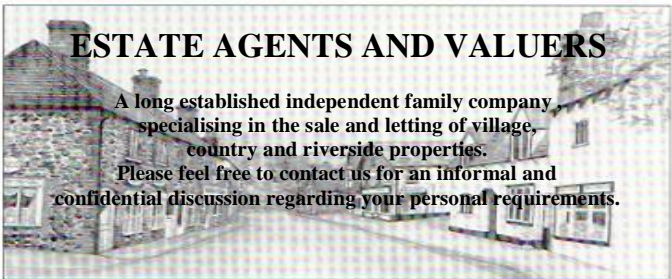
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Bible Study

Ladies, would you like to join a small group meeting fortnightly to study the Bible in a friendly and informal atmosphere? A few of us have been meeting for a while now and it would be lovely to have some more people with us. We meet on Monday afternoons during term time from 2.15-3-15ish at Shepherd's Close. Babies and toddlers are welcome. For more information and dates contact Geraldine Witcher on 9844959

Family Service January 12th 2003

Fun and friendship
Anticipating things in 2003
Music to sing to
Interesting talks
Lots of laughter
Young and old taking part together
Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock
Exciting activities
Reviewing things from 2002
Vocal toddlers love joining in
Informal and inspiring
Come and join us for the next one
Everybody welcome

The next family service will be at St Mary's on March 30th –
Mother's Day!

Messiah at the Falkland Islands' Memorial Chapel

The 150 voices of the combined Pangbourne Choral Society and the Pangbourne College Choir together with soloists and the Philomel Orchestra under the baton of Darren Everhart will be giving a performance of **Handel's Messiah** at **7:30pm** on **Sunday February 9th** in the stunning **Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College**.

At this concert the Choral Society will be saying a sad farewell to its Assistant Director of Music, Rufus Frowde, who is moving on to other roles including that of Assistant Director of Music at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace.

Many will have seen the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel recently in the BBC TV's Songs of Praise programme on Remembrance Sunday. Now is the chance for those who have not yet visited the chapel to experience this stunning and very moving building while listening to Handel's masterpiece.

There is ample free parking and easy access for any disabled visitors. Tickets: £7.50 (U-18s £1.50) from Premier Pet Store, Pangbourne High Street; on the door, or (with SAE, & cheque made out to 'PCS') by post from PCS Tickets, Swan View, 13 Shooters Hill, Pangbourne, RG8 7DZ.

Immediately following this concert the Choral Society will be starting rehearsing for their summer concert on a Coronation theme which will include Elgar's stirring Coronation Ode. The Society always welcomes new members. If you are interested in joining the choir just roll up on Tuesday February 11th in the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel around 7:30pm. More information on membership and our concerts can be found at our web site: <http://www.pangbournechoralsociety.fsnet.co.uk>

Children's Page

The story of David

Chapter 1 David the Shepherd Boy

David was the youngest in his family. If you're the youngest in yours, you'll know what that means – always being the first to go to bed; never being 'old enough' to join in the exciting things; always left a bit behind, not quite clever enough, or strong enough or tall enough. It was like that for David.

His big brothers, all seven of them, went off to be soldiers. The Israelites were at war with the Philistines, and the king was recruiting. All the young men were rushing to join the king's army and fight. They were given armour – shiny metal helmets and strong leather shields – and weapons – polished, sharp swords, and heavy iron battleaxes. They looked strong and fierce and unbeatable.

But not David. David wasn't strong enough to lift the battle-axe. David wasn't big enough to fit the armour. So David had to stay home and look after the family's flock of sheep. He might have been sulky and fed up at being left behind. But he wasn't. When he went out with the sheep he took his harp and played it. He made himself a sling – a sort of small weapon – out of a loop of goatskin. He would fit smooth pebbles in the sling, and whirl it round till the stone flew out fast and straight. At first he practiced hitting rocks and trees. Then he began to aim at moving targets and soon he was able to kill a rabbit or a bird for his lunch. It made a change from bread and sheeps' milk cheese.

David was a good shepherd. He made sure the sheep had grass to eat and water to drink. His sling protected them from foxes and vultures. But one day something bigger than a fox

came along looking for dinner! Something large and dangerous was prowling around, sneaking up towards an unsuspecting sheep. Crouching low and getting ready to pounce. What was it?

A lion! A hungry mountain lion had come down from the hills and was after David's sheep. Quickly David took his sling, fitted a pebble into it, took aim and... hit the lion right between the eyes. The lion stumbled, shook its head, then turned and ran back the way it had come, howling in pain. David had saved the sheep.

Another day something else big and wild and hungry arrived. A bear came lumbering over to where the sheep were. It was intent on something good to eat. It grabbed a panicking, struggling sheep in its strong claws. David didn't waste a minute. His sling was out, armed, aimed and fired before the bear had time to turn around. The wounded beast dropped the sheep, looking round to see what had attacked him. Several more stones hit him and so he gave up the fight, dropped to all fours and stumbled away into the forest. Once again, David had protected his sheep.

David was the youngest. He couldn't be a soldier yet. But he could be a good shepherd. What he didn't know was that all his training and practicing to protect his sheep would be very useful when he was older. God had a plan for David's life, and over the next few months we'll find out more about what that was. But remember, whether you're the oldest, in the middle or the youngest like David, you're special. You have things you can do, and things you will do, that no one else can, or will. God has an exciting plan for your life too – not fighting bears or lions like David, but.... well, wait and see!

Geraldine Witcher

Friends of St John's

We would like to thank all those who supported the Friend's raffle held at the Goring Heath Christmas Mini Market. A splendid £121.00 was raised towards our funds. Jackie Widdows of Shrivels Hill Woodcote won the Hamper and was highly delighted.

Jo Adams Chairman

St. John's Church

At the beginning of this year Pat Turner, after 20 years of keeping our church 'spick and span', has decided that she must stand aside for a younger person. It has been a tremendous act of loyalty to the church and vil- lage for so long and I would like to publicly express our thanks for all her hard work.

The good news is that she has agreed to continue the re- sponsibility as Verger, I am sure without her local knowledge we would be lost.

Jo Adams Churchwarden



Women's World Day of Prayer

St. John's Church Whitchurch Hill is hosting the Women's Day of Prayer on the 7th March 2003. at 2pm

The theme is Holy Spirit, Fill us which is being prepared by Christian Women of the Lebanon.

All are Welcome (Men, Women and Young People)

Refreshments will be served in the Goring Heath Village Hall (which is opposite the church) after the service.

PURLEY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

A.G.M.

The 25th Annual General Meeting will be held in the Purley Memorial Hall on Wednesday, 19 February, commencing at 7.45 p.m. It will be followed by an illustrated talk by Mr. Ben Viljoen on "Fragments of the Garden History of Purley".

Members are reminded that any nomination for election as an Officer or Committee Member must be made in writing to the Secretary, Mrs. P. Brightwell, 99 Devonshire Gardens, Tilehurst, RG31 6FF by 12 February.

TRADING

The Trading Store will reopen at 10 a.m. on Saturday, 1 February and thereafter will be open each Saturday and Sunday between 10 and 11 a.m. until the last Sunday in October.

Membership subscriptions for 2003 are now due and may be paid either at the Trading Store or at the A.G.M.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

The Society has the option to obtain two tickets for either 22 or 23 May at the special price per ticket £19 (whole day), £17 (afternoon and evening), £13 (evening only). Any member of the Society who would like to go should ring Mr. G. Critchell (0118 9844185) immediately. If more than two members apply there will be a draw. Closing date: 9 February.

Talks

The last talk this winter will be held on 19 March in Purley Memorial Hall commencing at 8 p.m. Mr. Bob Aggis will talk to us about House and Conservatory Plants.

Plant Sale

If any members have any special requirements for the Sale to be held on 17 May, could they please let me know or contact the Trading Store.

Marion Dabbs
9422349

Choir of the Year

It's almost a year since we welcomed Julian Oxley as our new organist and started up a regular choir again for the Sunday service. Our hope is to add joyfulness to Church worship in our parish by leading the congregation in hymns old and new and in singing the church liturgy. We have had a great deal of enjoyment in the choir, both from the music and from good company and fellowship.

We are grateful to Norman Hutt who has played for us when Julian was away; we are fortunate indeed to have such faithful support and to have been able to sing every Sunday during the year.

From time to time we have done a party piece—at Easter, the PCC AGM, Harvest and the Langtree Team Rector's induction we have sung a variety of appropriate anthems. And of course the Carol Service at St John's at Christmas was a wonderful occasion with parents and children singing in the aisles—yes literally! And more standing at the back. The highlight was children of all sizes standing at the front singing *Away in a Manger*.

Back in September, with the help of the PCC and other generous contributors, we were able to buy nine new choir robes and we plan to buy some new men's surplices to replace the present rather battered ones.

If as a member of the congregation you would like to request a particular hymn, please write down your choice, hand it to a choir member and Julian will do his best to find an opportunity to work it into a service. We practice the hymns and psalms for the month ahead for approximately an hour on the last Friday of the month at 6.30 in St Mary's, where we have a piano.

We would welcome more members in every voice part. Each of us is out of the village on various Sundays during the year and we want to build up to a critical mass of singers to avoid gaps in the four parts! We are grateful to the commitment of the regular choir members.

Adding children has proved a slow process. For the time being we hope to have the Carol Service volunteers with us again for the big festivals, the next one being Mothering Sunday. It was good to welcome pupils from Whitchurch Primary School to sing at the Family Service.

We owe a huge debt to Julian for inspiring us and for honing our skills; he plays exuberantly, getting the best out of our two organs at St John's and St Mary's. They are both elderly but quality instruments, now being shown off to advantage.

Tanya Hawley & Kate Giles.



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Please submit all copy for the next month's magazine by the 20th. I look forward to receiving your news, views, letters, etc. This magazine appears in the Church section on the village web site, see: www.whitchurchonthames.com

Sue Matthews

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Mothers Union

Whitchurch Branch as such closed down in November with the Thanksgiving Service and Lunch we arranged to mark this. The branch is now officially and happily joined with Rotherfield Branch which meets on the third Tuesday of each month at 10.30a.m. or 2.30p.m. in the Peppard Parish Room adjoining Peppard Church. This month's meeting is, therefore, on Feb.18th., at 10.30a.m. when someone from Yeldall Manor will be speaking about the work of drug rehabilitation there.

Our Prayer Group will continue to meet on the third Thursday each month at Abbots Lodge at 2.30p.m.

Mary Kent

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<p>Whitchurch Theatre Club ...takes you to plays and concerts about once a month; matinees & evenings, London & provinces. If interested, contact Mrs Diana Marriott, 23 Hillside, Hardwick Road Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7HL Tel: 0118 984 4582</p>	<p><i>Chiltern Domestic Appliances</i> Guaranteed repairs and servicing for Hoo- ver, Hotpoint, Zanussi, Ben- dix, Indesit & all major brands. Washing ma- chines, tumble dryers and dishwashers. Low call out fee and prompt atten- tion. Tel: 01491 681526</p>

Christingle remembered

Candles glowing in a darkened church. Children's eyes sparkling with excitement and wonder. Familiar carols taking us back to childhood days. And a retelling of the well loved, and mysterious Christmas story.

Christingle, six o'clock on Christmas Eve, is a special time. A time out of the busy-ness of preparing for family and friends. A time away from the material. A time to believe again and to unpack, for modern children in a modern way, the timeless truth symbolised by orange, ribbon, candle and sweets. To remember that Christmas is, among all the other things it is, a celebration of the coming of God to the world he made.

Geraldine Witcher

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0118 984 4489 or email: suematt@waitrose.com

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Reverend Kevin Davies
The Rectory, Checkendon, RG8 0SR
01491 680252

Services for

February

2nd February, The presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion

9th February, The Fourth Sunday before Lent

St Mary's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St John's	9.30 a.m.	Parish Communion
St Mary's	6 p.m.	Evening Prayers

16th February, The Third Sunday before Lent

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion

23rd February, The Second Sunday before Lent

St Mary's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St John's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion
St Mary's	6 p.m.	Evening Prayers

2nd March, The Sunday Next before Lent

St John's	8 a.m.	The Holy Communion
St Mary's	10 a.m.	Parish Communion