

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



February 2004

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Dear friends in Christ,



We begin the month of February with the last white of Christmas, at the Presentation on 1st Feb, and end it with the first purple of Lent, on Ash Wednesday: a reminder that the baby Jesus whose birth we have just celebrated, soon grew up and became a man who by his life and teaching changed the world for ever.

In fact the Sundays of January, in different ways, were all telling us that the boy Jesus, the carpenter's son of Nazareth, is also the Christ of God. And "Christ", of course, is neither a swear-word nor Jesus' surname: it's more like His job-title. He is the Anointed One, the Messiah, who is on a mission to set His people free.

Some of His followers thought that He was going to free Israel by driving out the occupying Romans at sword-point, and when He was arrested, tried and executed by those same Romans (with a little help from Jewish religious leaders), no doubt they were hugely depressed and discouraged.

But in this story, nothing is what it seems. The Israel of God is not a nation-state, but a consecrated people. The Kingdom of God is not about land and power, but about a full, loving and abundant life. And the freedom which the Christ has bought for us with a price, on the Cross, includes the freedom to turn him down – and most of us do.

On Ash Wednesday (25th Feb) at 7.30 p.m. we will come together with the other churches of the Team for a special evening service 'down the hill' at St Mary's, and hear again the invitation and the call to turn away from our past mistakes, and turn back to Him.

One way to deepen and share our understanding of this God who calls us into loving relationship, is to join a Lent Group. ACT Pangbourne will again be running a programme, and this year we shall also have our own Lent Course in Whitchurch, using the York Course entitled: "Tough Talk – The Hard Sayings of Jesus." There will be five sessions, from the week after Ash Wednesday until the week before Holy Week, on a Monday or Wednesday evening. (Please let me know your preference.) More details nearer the time: do come if you can, so we can learn from each other.

Yours in Christ Jesus,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter", with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Letter from the Team Rector

Watch the Birdie.

There was a flurry of excitement in the bird watching world shortly before we moved down from Cumbria. A pair of Ospreys –large, beautiful and very rare birds of prey – had nested close to Bassenthwaite in the northern Lake District. A round-the-clock guard was posted on the nest site, and special hides and viewing points were established so that the public and the enthusiasts could perhaps catch a glimpse of this wonderful bird, which had not nested anywhere in England for a long time.

Unity among human beings is somewhat like those Ospreys - you have to work very hard if you are to catch a glimpse of her, and when you get close you have to be very careful because she cannot be held or caged. There is something strong, deep and mysterious about unity. Her presence is almost a gift.

So, what does human unity actually look like in our society and where must we look for it? At first sight our world is a scramble of adversarial politics and competitive economics;

We are governed by laws made by opposing political groupings, swinging this way and that way, first one policy, then, ten years later, the opposite.

We work for companies who seek to out-profit their competitors, with little sense of loyalty higher than the boardroom or the shareholders.

Together, our government and our employers trumpet that we have a huge freedom of choice, and in one sense, we can make choices that our parents could never have made. But these so called freedoms are based upon common denominators that have chained us together in a way our parents never knew.

For the unity that exists in society today is a unity of consumption.

We are bombarded with images and multi channel entertainment. The choice has never been greater. But its just TV. And we're all watching.

We have access to a huge range of information and services via the internet.

Online, you can do anything. But we're all using Windows.

We can travel farther and faster than ever before to reach new and exciting destinations. We can all go anywhere. Unfortunately, it is usually on the same road.



Is this bland unity of consumption all humanity can hope for?

Is the sum of our togetherness being stuck on the M25, watching the Matrix on your cellphone (again) ?

There does not appear to be on offer any other kind of vision for our human togetherness and purpose in the world, at least one that can be spoken publicly.

Worryingly, we seem in addition to be losing our capacity for civil disagreement (look what happened to Kilroy).

(Continued on page 6)

<h1>Englefield</h1>  <p>Tel : 0118 9304898</p> <p>Open : Mon-Sat 9-5pm</p> <p>(Sundays 10-4pm May & June)</p> <p>GARDEN CENTRE</p>		
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<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)

Neither of the social models on the table in front of us is very attractive.

Across the channel there is taking shape the grand European project, the ever increasing house of cards that is liberal degeneracy.

And across the Atlantic, there lies shimmering on the horizon the American dream of wealth, health, and the happiness of capital obesity.

No wonder there is indecision at the top here, and confusion at the bottom.

In the light of this, I do not believe that the soaring osprey of unity will be found by the crashing elephants of politics or economics as currently practiced.

A deeper vision is needed, one that has as its priorities a sustainable world and a just world. In human terms that means we should be seeking for a right relationship with the Creation, and right relationships with our neighbours, both in our street and across the globe.

(Continued on page 8)

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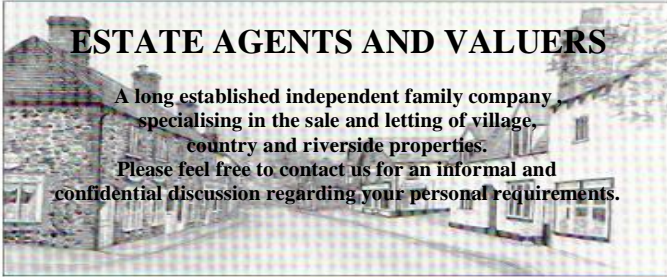
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(Continued from page 6)

This can only happen if we agree about something, and that something cannot be the triumph of capital because there's never enough to go round. Neither can it be the autonomy of mankind because you cannot have freedom without responsibility.

A deeper vision of human unity has to do with bigger things, like the search for truth, the science of wonder, the humility of prayer, and the sacred heart at the centre of everything.

For we are all God's children, and we need to return to this simple "hide" to find the resources of togetherness that we need for human hope.

But for now, we are lost in the woods and the long grass, and we run from the gifts of God, fearful of bright eyes and sharp claws, seeking any way but the way home.

KGD 14/1/04



Purley Players
Next production in 2004 will be

CAPER at the OK CORRAL

at St Mary's Church Hall, Purley on Thames on:

Wednesday 10 March (First Night)

Thursday 11 March to Saturday 13 March

all performances will commence at 8.00 pm

Tickets: £6 for Adults and

£4 for Senior Citizens and Children

Tickets will be reduced for the Wednesday performance

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A cannibal, feeling a bit peckish, gobbled up a Methodist missionary for his elevenses. He then ate a Catholic priest for lunch and an Anglican bishop for supper. That night he couldn't sleep with a terrible pain in his stomach which still distressed him in the morning, so he was obliged to call for the witchdoctor. The witchdoctor examined him and when he heard what he had been eating recently he knew what the problem was and give the cannibal his diagnosis: "You are experiencing an ecumenical movement".



If you are unhappy with your vicar, simply have your church wardens send off a copy of this letter to six other churches who are tired of their vicar. Then bundle up your vicar and send him to the church at the top of the list of this letter. Within a week you will receive 16,435 vicars and one of them should be alright. Have faith in this chain letter for vicars. Do not break the chain. One church did and got their old vicar back again.

Children's Page

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Have you ever done anything you shouldn't? Of course you have. We all do. Sometimes it's a big thing, like stealing something that doesn't belong to us. Sometimes it's a little thing, like not doing what we are told, or answering back nastily when someone tells us to do something. And do you ever feel a kind of uncomfy feeling somewhere in your tummy when you know you've done something wrong. I think we all have that feeling too – it's called conscience and it reminds us that we should say sorry and that we need to be forgiven.

In Jesus' pattern prayer he told his followers that they could ask God to forgive them, and he would, but he also said they had to forgive other people too. He told a story explaining why.

Once there was a man who owed the king thousands of pounds. The king would have been quite right to throw him in prison and take all his possessions instead of the money. But the man begged to be forgiven, and the king, who must have been a very nice king, told him he'd let him off everything he owed. You'd think that would make the man happy and kind in return, wouldn't you? But it didn't work that way. He went straight out from being with the king, and saw another of the king's servants. This man owed him some money. But not thousands of pounds. Oh no, only a few pence really. And the first man wanted his money back. He grabbed him and began to strangle him. Then he got him thrown into prison until he paid.

What do you think happened next? Yes, the king got to hear of this. And he was very, very angry – really furious. He called the man back in and yelled at him:

'You wicked servant. I forgave you all your huge debt. You should have forgiven your fellow servant, who after all only

Women's World Day of Prayer

Friday 5th March 2004

In Faith – Women Shape the Future

(prepared by Christian Women of Panama)

2pm at Ipsden Church

Speaker : The Revd. Angela Linton

All Welcome (Men, Women and Young People)

Refreshments will be served afterwards

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ENGLISH CHURCH BELLS and bell ringing

Q. Are the bells rung mechanically?

A. No. English church bells have traditionally always been rung by real people! Every time you hear them ringing there are people actually pulling the ropes. They are not always hidden away up in the tower out of sight either like they are at St Marys. In some churches the ringing chamber is on an open balcony up at the back of the church as at Checkendon, and a lot of churches have ringing from the ground floor.

In the ringing chamber ropes come down in a circle in order of bell-size (usually clockwise). Ringers stand in an inward facing circle behind the ropes. Junior ringers and others who are not very tall stand on a box a few centimetres high so they are at the right height for ringing.

Q. So do ringers need to be immensely fit and strong?

A. No - it's all technique. The bells rotate on ball bearings so only the friction has to be overcome. Some quite small children and elderly people ring perfectly well. What other hobby can you begin as a child and continue into your eighties!



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TO LIGHTEN THE LOAD

Purley Horticultural Society

A.G.M.

The 26th Annual General Meeting will be held in the Purley Memorial Hall on Wednesday 18th February, commencing at 7.45 p.m. It will be followed by a talk by Mr. David Penny from the Berkshire College of Agriculture. David has been very involved in the designing of their Show Gardens at the R.H.S. Shows for quite a few years and regularly broadcasts on Radio Berkshire's Garden programme giving expert advice to solve our gardening problems. His talk will be "Year-round colour and interest in your garden". 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 11th February.

Talk

On Wednesday, 17th March, Mrs. E. Farrar will give a talk on "Learning from One's Mistakes". This will take place in Purley Memorial Hall at 8 p.m.

Spring Show

This will take place on Saturday, 3rd April in Purley Memorial Hall.

Trading

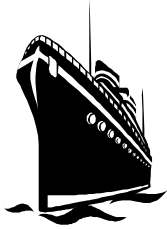
The Trading Store will reopen at 10 a.m. on Saturday, 31st January and thereafter will be open each Saturday and Sunday between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. until the last Sunday in October. Membership of the Society for 2004 is now £1.50 and subscriptions can be renewed at the Trading Shed when this reopens.

Marion Dabbs
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When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said, "Let us pray." We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.

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Saints and Dedications

Medieval belief and faith had a saint for every calling, for every ailment, almost for every possible circumstance. St Christopher was not only the patron saint of travellers but of porters. He was known as a protector against sudden death and was often painted on the wall facing the main entrance of the church. St Nicholas was the patron saint of sailors, children, merchants and pawnbrokers. St Blaise protected those with sore throats, in addition to being the patron saint of woolcombers, and St Cecilia was the guardian of makers of music.

(from Discovering Church Treasure by Eric Delderfield)

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Whitchurch Hill W.I.

On Tuesday, 20th January, we welcomed Nigel Glover-Wright to the hall for a talk entitled 'Talk on the Wild Side'. The slides and talk were very exciting and stimulated much discussion. The settings were the natural wild life parks of Kenya and Tanzania. We saw the wonderful Mt. Kilimanjaro as a backdrop to the animals: lions, leopards, zebras, hyenas, jackals, etc. Because of his patience and determination to catch these special moments, wonderful shots were obtained. A lioness ensnaring a family of waterhogs and trapping the baby were particularly tense. His love of African wild life was apparent. Next month we welcome Stan Palling with 'Neptune Care of the Coastline'.
A. Bradley

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Editor, Parish Magazine

Sue Matthews, Ashdown, Duchess Close
0118 984 4489 or email: suematt@waitrose.com

Team Rector:

Reverend Kevin Davies
The Rectory, Checkendon, RG8 0SR
01491 680252
www.langtree.org

Services for

February

1st February, Presentation

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Parish Communion
Revd Angela Lindon

8th February, 3rd 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

15th February, 2nd before Lent

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Parish Communion

22nd February. Next 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

25th February, Ash Wednesday

St Mary's 7.30 p.m. Order for the Beginning of Lent

29th February, Lent 1

10.30 a.m. Team Service at Woodcote St Leonard

St Mary's 4 p.m. Family Service

7th March, Lent 2

St John's 8 a.m. The Holy Communion

St Mary's 10 a.m. Parish Communion