

I am writing this before our journey 'down under' to New Zealand to baptise our new granddaughter, Maria, born in July to Laurence & Kate; also to celebrate my 70th birthday at the home of my brother in Auckland; and a week later to celebrate (maybe with a swim in the sea) Christmas with our New Zealand family.

Then, in January, we go to Australia for the 5th World Assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace in Melbourne, where we'll have the opportunity to renew acquaintance with ex-President Jimmy Carter, whom Hannah and I met with other members of the 3rd World Assembly of WCRP (then meeting at Princeton) in the White House in 1979.

As I write, despite all this I feel very sad that we shall not be able to celebrate Christmas with you at St James's, as during the interregnum I have become so much part of you all. I have greatly enjoyed being able to 'come back from retirement' to being almost a vicar again, which gives one a special place in the community, which I value.

Even preaching seemed different somehow. I used to wonder how I kept going for over 33 years (26 years in one parish and seven in the previous one) preaching to the same congregation twice every Sunday - or how they managed to put up with it! I certainly never had such a splendid team to share the load as there is at St James's: Hannah, David, Don and Alan, with such strong support always available.

I did have some splendid lay colleagues in my parishes as we gradually built up a team together. But the conduct of services and preaching was almost entirely a single-handed task. Perhaps this was my fault, but certainly in the earliest days both in Crewe and Stockport we just did not have the material to create the kind of team we have here.

During the Interregnum, there has been a subtle difference in the experience of preaching and conducting services. It is one thing to come out of the congregation occasionally to take duty when the vicar is away; but it is something entirely different to be involved every Sunday, and to sense the response of the congregation.

The reason why it was possible to go on preaching twice a Sunday for nearly 40 years (including the time as curate in charge of a daughter church in South Yorkshire) is because in time preaching and worshipping become a two-way process, especially where the congregation are receptive; the message from God arrives out of the shared experience of priest and congregation, with the biblical message from the prayer book week by week during the church's year speaking directly and relevantly with seemingly uncanny aptness again and again.

This is how God speaks to us, and priest and congregation must be ready and receptive to enable God to communicate. This is the overwhelming lesson I have learned from a lifetime's (mostly single-handed) ministry among ordinary people, and it has been wonderful to find the same thing happening again here.

As I write, I have no idea what are the prospects of a new vicar coming to St James's. If, while we have been away, there has been an appointment, then these notes will be

superfluous, and the editor can simply tear them up. But if no vicar has yet been appointed, the message may have some meaning, and will be published just as we arrive home again at the beginning of Lent.

I shall look forward to resuming duty, if that is what is required. Lent is very early this year, and together we can prepare ourselves for Holy Week and Easter and the exciting times ahead.

Last year I celebrated Palm Sunday with green palm crosses in New Zealand in the Autumn. A week later we arrived home in the Spring on Easter Eve. We shall look forward to celebrating Easter again with you this year, but this time also sharing Lent with you.

Gordon Wilson

Readers Re-licensing

Every five years a service is held at St. Paul's Cathedral to re-license existing Readers or admit new ones. This service covers all of the Diocese of London and is attended by the Bishop of London and all of the Area Bishops. The choir is made up of choristers from churches all over London and they form a colourful addition in their various robes.

This year I was fortunate to have a seat near the front and could both see and hear what was going on. There are about forty Readers in the Kensington Area but in the country as a whole there are over seven thousand, more than there are clergy, and in some areas the local churches are almost totally dependent on the Readers to provide the services.

The very short but excellent address was given by Michael Baughan, the Bishop of Chester, who is now Chairman of the Central Readers' Conference. He spoke about the role of Readers to preach, teach and evangelize; how prayer is vital to their ministry; and the need for Readers to read widely and prepare thoroughly because 'shoddiness is unworthy'. Readers minister in the name of God and are answerable to him. The Bishop said 'stick to the gospel', 'show the joy of Christ in your own life' and always remember 'we have an unchanging faith' and that 'Christ died for us'. These are tenets we should all cling to, not just Readers!

The service was a eucharist and David Dore administered the chalice at one of the several stations with a magnificent gold chalice.

Among those admitted as Readers for the first time was Mr. Dennis Jones, Headmaster of Bishop Wand School, and some of his staff were re-licensed together with other local people we knew.

It was a pity that no members of our congregation came to support their Readers - we do have a tenth of all the Readers in the Kensington Area!

Helen Taylor

Christmas at St. James's

Christingle Service

This year the Christingle Service was before Christmas. As usual there was a large and cheerful congregation with much participation from the youngest of those present. Alan captivated his young audience, and many others, with a fairy tale of princes and dwarfs, and we collected our Christingles and thought of the Light that was shortly to come into the world. It was a very happy occasion.

Jane Dobson

Parish Carol Singing

On Wednesday 21st December 20 stalwart singers, under the able baton of Olive Hayward, went round the Parish singing carols. The weather was kind to us and an enjoyable hour and a half soon passed, ending at Wayside for hot mince pies, which had been donated by various people, washed down with coffee and a drop of the 'hard stuff' provided by Paul Revis.

A collecting box was taken with us and thanks mainly to the licensee of the Windmill Pub, who invited us to sing in the bar, a sum of £13.92 was collected which has been given to the Church's Urban Fund.

David Lloyd

Crib service

Christmas itself started for many local young families on the afternoon of Christmas Eve. Then it was that Hannah introduced our Crib Service to a congregation that filled the church, and Eila and her helpers encouraged the forty or so children present to go forward and on to the platform to take part in a re-enactment of the nativity story. Never were so many 'stars' assembled together, nor so many 'shepherds', nor 'animals'. And, of course, there were Mary (Suzanne) with her baby and Joseph (Nicholas) and the angel (Caitlyn). So the marvellous story unfolded - under Eila's guidance - and we sang and were led in prayer by Geoffrey and Suzanne, and Lucy and Emily. To finish, the children were able to wander by the crib representing that story and by the multi-coloured lights of the Christmas tree.

Nicholas introduced this Crib service some years ago now, and, for a year or two, only a few families gathered round the crib set up in the baptistry. Over the years the numbers grew and it became necessary to use the whole church. I am sure that Nicholas will be pleased to hear that once again so many of the young families filled the church on Christmas Eve.

Ron Bridges

Midnight Mass

I understand the symbolism of entering a darkened church for the Christmas Midnight Service but is the darkness appreciated by people who perhaps only come to our church once or twice a year? It is assumed that everyone knows the words of the carols and

the Eucharist but for all that I brought a torch with me to help me join in the singing and prayers in peaceful confidence!

There were fewer people this year - can the inconvenient dimness be the reason? Three years ago I had to spend Christmas away from home. The church I went to was full of golden light and shone forth like a beacon as we came towards it out of the surrounding darkness. Am I just a grumbling Philistine or do others feel as I do? If so, please tell us. I know I would feel quite happy if I knew that everyone else were happy too.

But it was a lovely service. I enjoyed the singing of the choir as we came in and settled ourselves, and the service was conducted reverently and lovingly. There is always light even in the dimness and we of St. James's have so much to be grateful for in those that keep Christ's light constantly alive everywhere and in every situation.

Margery Orton

Carol Services

In the week or two before Christmas, the church was full on five occasions as children from local schools came with their parents for carol services.

On Christmas afternoon we had a short congregational Carol Service with a very simple format, carols interspersed with seasonal readings of poems and quotations from a variety of sources. About thirty people attended, mostly people we do not often see in church.

On the Sunday after Epiphany, our splendid choir sang several pieces, including a difficult modern cantata, 'The Journey of the Astrologers', and were joined by the congregation in many carols. Readings by representatives of many groups, including Pam, Jeremy and Hannah on behalf of the Sunday School, told the Christmas story.

Children's Party - 7 January - Recipe

1. Take about 2 dozen children of assorted ages. Stir thoroughly, e.g., by vigorous movement to music around chairs, etc.
2. Add liberal helpings of crisps, cakes, sausages, etc., well blended with soft drinks to taste.
3. Spread out, seated in rows, for the mixture to settle quietly. (N.B. For best results, now introduce the admirable Tim Rowett, to share some of his huge collection of unusual toys with the children; first demonstrating, then leaving them to be played with ad lib.) This is an excellent item for children of all ages.
4. Add giant soap bubbles, helium-filled balloons, and copious quantities of confectionery bars.
5. Keep deftly supervised throughout by Alan Taylor, David Lloyd and ladies of the Social Committee.
6. Time: about 2½ hours. Cost: 25p per head.

Highly recommended by all who tried it!

Grandpa Gostling

We are all extremely grateful to all those who, especially in the absence of a Vicar, have enabled us to celebrate Christmas so comprehensively. In particular we thank our neighbouring priests, Timothy Evans and John Vincent, for taking communion services, our four Readers for all the effort they continue to put in, our Churchwardens, our Organist and Eila Severn, though, of course, many others have helped in a variety of ways.

The collections at the Christmas services, which totalled £297, are to go to Crisis at Christmas. £118 collected at the Christingle Service will be sent to the Children's Society, and about £21 collected by Hal and Eila Severn as a result of their delivery of Christmas Cards will go, together with the collection during the Parish Carol Singing, to the Church's Urban Fund.

I Asked God For a Christmas Gift



Eight weeks before Christmas I received a grief-stricken telephone call from my friend Ann whose younger son, Duncan, had been in a horrific motor accident and was in intensive care in Oxford. He was not expected, that first night, to live until morning and it was suggested that the life support systems should be turned off.

I remember telling Ann that it was when Man's powers came to an end that God's began and we prayed for Duncan's complete recovery. Prayers were asked for Duncan here in St. James's and in Dorchester Abbey and we prayed in the Julian Group. Step by step our prayers were answered and the various prognoses of the doctors were, one by one, not fulfilled. Duncan lived, he was able to breathe without the support system, the massive clot on the brain shown on the first X-rays did move - it disappeared between one X-ray and the next; he was taken out of intensive care; he was able to take food and when last I heard from Ann a week before Christmas a rehabilitation specialist had given it as his opinion that Duncan, would in time 'be able to live a useful life'. So far he had been sedated to rest the brain and he had not spoken.

Very early on Christmas morning, imagining that the family would spend their Christmas in hospital near to Duncan's bed I asked God for a Christmas Gift for him and his family: that Duncan would speak, knowingly, to his family.

On Tuesday 27th December Ann rang me. Duncan had improved so much that he had been allowed home for Christmas and on Christmas Day he had spoken to them knowingly and intelligently and that facility in speech had continued during the holiday although he tired at times. Moreover, on Boxing Day he had walked, supported by his father and brother. Truly God is a generous giver; 'gifts will be given you. Good measure, pressed down and running over will be poured into your lap'. (*Luke 6:38*)

Margery Orton

The Spire - a Symbol?

Built just over 100 years ago to coincide with Queen Victoria's golden jubilee, the spire was the last of several enlargements and additions to the originally rather modest church of St James, built in 1863 by its first Vicar, thus marking the beginnings of Hampton Hill as we know it.

Rising from a well-proportioned tower of mellow stock brick with stone dressings, the gracefully tapering Portland stone spire is a familiar and prominent local landmark.

To the former well-to-do parishioners responsible for raising the spire 'to the glory of God', it may also have been a symbol of the solid Victorian society in which they lived.

Today, a century later, many fewer of the parishioners belong to or attend the church (though some would claim an allegiance); but the spire still stands, serene and sure, symbolic of the Church, as part of which a faithful congregation continues God's work in the community which it serves.

As the newspapers, radio and television continue to report the apparent decline of moral values in our materialistic society, here, surely, is something strong and enduring, to which we can all turn for re-assurance in times of trouble. Or can we?

For the observant, the recent appearance of the steeplejack's ladders will have signalled a warning of trouble, and now, sadly, we have confirmation from the architect's inspection that the spire may not be as solid as we thought.

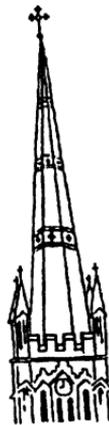
Undamaged by the violence of the '87 hurricane, it is however under attack from the insidious effects of dampness, frost, and atmospheric pollution which are causing areas of masonry, where the spire rises from the tower, to crumble. Stonework on both tower and spire is eroded, and the cross at the top is split.

Urgent work is necessary to restore these areas and prevent further damage. We have approximate cost estimates, which may increase as the work is tackled, from which it appears that the total cost of the work to the tower and spire will not be less than £10,000.

To raise such a sum will be a formidable task for our fairly small congregation but we think it right to proceed in faith with the work starting in late Spring, while seeking help from the wider community.

We shall therefore shortly be launching a special appeal which we hope will be supported by many in the locality for whom the spire has a special significance. In the meantime, we have on display in the church, a very interesting set of photographs taken by the steeplejack from the spire showing close-ups of some of the damage; also included are some spectacular views.

More details to follow.



Jack Gostling

A Journey in China - Part 2

On by air to X'ian the capital of China for a thousand years. It has now been made famous by the accidental discovery in 1974 of the Tomb of Emperor Qin Shihuang 221-206 B.C., with its six thousand Terra-cotta warriors and horses. The previous evening, we had watched a dance troupe performing dances from the Tang dynasty period 7-10 c.A.D. Their costumes were magnificent. The orchestra played on replica instruments of the period. It was a most enchanting spectacle.

Another flight across high mountains for two hours to Chongqing, the largest city in south west China, its centre built on a peninsula between the Jialing and Yangtze rivers which were not bridged until 1966 and 1980. We visited a district committee responsible for a thousand families. Most of them were employed by a local rubber and electric motor factory. The houses they lived in were either government, factory or privately owned. They had running water and natural gas from 1981. The committee is responsible for the education of the young, family planning, street cleaning, fighting crime, legal affairs and security. We visited two houses, one privately owned and shared by three generations, an electric fan and bed were in each room. The other was a government owned flat and we found the family were Christians, religious pictures were on the wall. We all sang a hymn in our own language and took photographs. We then saw a kindergarten school run by the rubber factory and joined the children with some of their action songs. Artists fled to Chongqing to escape from the Japanese war and we visited two artists villages for both traditional and modern Chinese art.

Early one morning we boarded the modern cruise ship, the White Emperor, which had eighty two berth cabins, for a four day cruise down the Yangtze to Wuhan, a distance of 793 miles. French, Italian and Dutch nationals were on board. The Chinese call the Yangtze, the Changjiang, the long river. It is the third longest in the world, 4000 miles, and a third of China's population live along its banks. Our first night was spent at Wanxian, the last mission station of Alison's parents. We were to travel down through the famous gorges, in far greater comfort than Alison had over sixty years ago, as a small child.

Below the last gorge you pass through the huge lock at the Gezhou dam across the river. It took up to ten years to complete and its turbines provide electricity for four provinces. For the next two nights we travelled down the river and early on Sunday morning arrived at Wuhan. It consists of three cities, Han Kou, Han Yang and Wuhan, pop. 6.2m. We had supper in the Victory Hotel in what was once the British Section of Han Kou, having called on the Christian church first. The hotel had seen better days, but we had an unusual meal half western, half chinese food.

Our next night's journey down the Yangtze on a Chinese Steamer going to Shanghai was very different from the cruise ship. We boarded at 8 p.m. along with a thousand local Chinese. Fortunately we had cabins with an electric fan as the heat was most oppressive. We disembarked at Jiujiang at 4 a.m. in darkness, hundreds more were waiting to get on, as we came off.

From there a coach took us to the hill town of Guling in Mount Lushan, which is like a copy of our Lake District. It covers an area of 120 sq. miles, with 99 peaks, the highest 4800 feet. Guling is at three thousand feet. Before 1949 there were no roads up to

Guling, only a path including 1300 steps. Before the war it was a town for wealthy foreigners and Chinese government officials only, we saw Madam Chiang Kai-Shek's villa, the house that Chairman Mao briefly lived in three times and now a museum. Also a building formerly the American school, which was given to the CIM in 1946 and used as a mission school until all foreigners were expelled in 1950. We stayed in the Lushan guest house. We were the only foreigners as very few visit Guling. On our first night the town's electricity failed, we ate by candle light and on the next night the town's water pump blew up, so we had no water for twelve hours. Mount Lushan is very beautiful with fantastic views from the mountains over the plains below.

On leaving Guling we had a five hour coach drive through miles of well ordered rice growing country and small villages to Nanchang. The next day, our last in China was to be the most dramatic. We left our hotel at 6 a.m. for the hours drive to the small airport where we had breakfast. Our plane for the flight to Canton should have left at 8.30 a.m. but because of engine trouble did not take off until 2.30 p.m. It was a 48 seater, twin prop Russian built machine with two pilots and one stewardess. After two hours we landed at Canton in a heavy monsoon storm. As we stepped off the plane's small rear ladder into half a foot of water on the runway we were soaked. All the Canton streets were flooded several feet deep and our minibus stalled but fortunately restarted. Our guide somehow managed to get us a meal and seats on the last train, the 7.40 p.m. to Kowloon. By 11 p.m. we were back in our Hong Kong hotel. Thus ended a tour of China with old school friends, never to be repeated, but never to be forgotten.

Alwyne Loyd

MU January Meeting

Mothers' Union members met for a Christmas Carol Quiz which proved to be highly entertaining. With Vivienne Prentice at the piano and Coryn Robinson organising us we began. Puzzled faces appeared, as well known carols were played. We had expected the opening lines but Vivienne caught us out by playing small sections. There were remonstrations and whispering of answers which caused much hilarity. I took over from Vivienne and we all sang the first verse of each carol. This was followed by an intriguing questionnaire. We had to find out who went jogging, who would like to be the Queen, who still eats soft boiled eggs and who did not eat too much at Christmas, etc. I felt very righteous in being able to confess to the latter. This was followed by tea with me thinking that although I may not have eaten much at Christmas, I had eaten and laughed too much that afternoon,

Janet Jeffries.

Stewardship

Contributions during 1988 came to £19,885.

Folk Dance Evening

The Social Committee have pleasure in inviting you to the Folk Dance Evening at the Parish Hall, School Road, Hampton Hill on Saturday 4th March 1989 at 7.30pm. Tickets, priced £2.50 adults and £1.50 for children under 14, will shortly be on sale. This includes refreshments and drink. A raffle with many good prizes will be held during the evening and all profits will go to the Church's Urban Fund.

Those of you who have been before will know that a very enjoyable evening is had by all, so make a date with us for Saturday 4th March, and help swell the Fund.

David Lloyd

Hampton Hill Association 1964 - 1989

As it is the Association's Silver Jubilee year a SPECIAL BUFFET SUPPER PARTY will be held on SATURDAY 25th FEBRUARY at the Parish Hall, School Road, from 7.30 to 11.30.

There will be a licensed bar, music and dancing, competitions and an excellent entertainment by a group, 'The Caroleans', who donate all their fees to Leukaemia Research. The catering will be professional to give all a chance to join in the fun.

Come and join us for this cheerful occasion and meet old and new friends. All welcome! Tickets cost £5.00 including supper and can be obtained from Dennis Dolan - 979 8641, Joyce Doughty - 979 2839 and Dorothy Weston - 979 6673, or your HHA Street Representative.

Around the Spire

In the last few days we have heard of the death of Mrs. Amy Lewis (née Daines). She was born and brought up in Hampton Hill and was a life-long member of St. James's until old age forced her to move to Lancashire to be near her family. She died on 1st January after a short illness. We send our condolences to her family and assure them that we feel sadness too at the passing of such a sprightly and cheerful lady.

Many people will have missed seeing Freda Moses in church recently. She has been suffering from a bad chest infection but is much better, though still not well enough to leave the house.

From the Registers

Funerals

December 6	Edith Mary Seal	Greville House, Greville Road, Richmond	aged 85
December 19	Lilian Emily Poulton	22 Fairlight, Uxbridge Road	aged 73
January 4	Ivy Muriel Hibbert	42 Exeter Road, Hanworth	aged 82

Services and Dates to Note

February 1	14.30	Mothers' Union, Wayside	
	20.00	Healing Ministry in church	
2		<u>Presentation of Christ in the Temple</u>	
	19.15	Holy Communion	
5	08.00	Holy Communion	
	09.30	Informal Service	
	18.30	Parish Communion	
6	15.00	Magazine Committe, 19 St. James's Road	
	20.15	Stewardship Committee, 5 Oxford Road	
	20.15	Hall Management Committee	
7	09.30	Holy Communion	
	20.00	Tuesday Club talk 'Nepal', Wayside	
8		<u>Ash Wednesday</u>	
	20.00	Parish Communion	
9	19.15	Holy Communion or Said Evening Prayer	
12	08.00	Holy Communion	
	09.30	Parish Communion	
	10.00	Said Evening Prayer	
	18.30	Prayer 'n' Praise	
14	09.30	Holy Communion	
16	19.15	Holy Communion	
19	08.00	Holy Communion	
	09.30	Parish Communion	
	17.00	Laurel Dene Service	
	18.30	Ecumenical Vespers	
21	09.30	Holy Communion	
	20.00	Tuesday Club talk 'Taken for Granted - Water'	
23	19.15	Holy Communion	
25	19.30	Hampton Hill Association Buffet Supper, Parish Hall	
26	08.00	Holy Communion	
	09.30	Parish Communion	
	17.00	Said Evening Prayer	
	18.30	Prayer 'n' Praise	
28	09.30	Holy Communion	
March 1	20.00	P.C.C., Vestry	
	2	19.15	Holy Communion
	4	19.30	Folk Dance Evening, Parish Hall
	5	08.00	Holy Communion
	09.30	Informal Service	
	18.30	Parish Communion with Healing Ministry	



Advance Notices

March 7	08.00	Tuesday Club Open Evening
April 22		Life-saving fast