

Manger Square, Bethlehem - it's a striking address, but visit Bethlehem any day of the week and our image of it, taken from the carols we sing, could hardly be more removed from the truth. 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' - well it is no little town, it is a large town, almost a suburb of Jerusalem, and it doesn't lie still but it is a bustling sort of place. 'Bethlehem of Noblist Cities' - it doesn't appear noble; no grand avenues, no wide piazzas. In fact, Manger Square, Bethlehem, is completely obliterated much of the time by tourist coaches searching for a parking place and a large Israeli police and army post in the heart of this Palestinian city. In fact, Bethlehem is planned to be the administrative capital of the new Palestinian state - whose seeds are currently growing only in Jericho and Gaza.

But to get back to that address- Manger Square, Bethlehem. The Church of the Nativity is vast, of huge solid stone construction, for the church was fortified by the Crusaders. However, to get to the place of Christ's birth, first you need to bend very low, to get through the door of the church. With all the hustle and bustle, the soldiers, the tourist trinket-sellers, behind you, stoop low and enter into a different space, a vast church with ancient mosaic floors and whose columns are stained brown with centuries of incense, centuries of prayer.

And then descend, deep into the earth into a cave beneath the church. Is this the place where Christ was born? A cave, beneath a church, is this what it all comes down to? A single place in space, a single spot in history?

The baby Jesus didn't stay tucked away - and neither can the modern pilgrim, for like Jesus, one leaves the place by another way. Today we climb more stairs out of the earth, out of the cave back to the church, out of the church back to the brightness of Manger Square: the fumes, the wire of the police station, the tourists and the touts.

May be, that is what Christmas is about, to bow low, to look deeply inside oneself, to go into the cave inside each one of us and come out again, touched by God who takes risks. God who becomes human that we might become like God. God who enters not just human life in one place in one time, but God who enters my life, that I may become part of God's life.

And soldiers and souvenir shops they had in Jesus' day in Bethlehem. Children were slain from Herod to the holocaust and even on the streets of Bethlehem this year. To celebrate Christmas is not to escape from the world - but to celebrate the risk, by taking on the risk ourselves, that God in human beings, in you and me, can and does transform life. Not just once long ago and far away - but always and everywhere.

So when you put up the crib, buy the presents, cook the turkey, or even when you go to Church this Christmas, are you prepared to take the risk that God might just be transforming your life?

Christmas Services

Sunday 18th December	8.00 am Holy Communion
	9.30 am Parish Communion
	6.30 pm PARISH CAROL SERVICE
Monday 19th December to Friday 23rd	9.15 am Morning Prayer
Saturday 24th December	9.15 am Morning Prayer
CHRISTMAS EVE	4.30 pm CHILDREN'S CRIB SERVICE
	11.45 pm MIDNIGHT EUCHARIST
Sunday 25th December	8.00 am HOLY COMMUNION
CHRISTMAS DAY	9.30 am PARISH COMMUNION
Monday 26th December St. Stephen	10.00 am Holy Communion
Tuesday 27th December St. John the Evangelist	10.00 am Holy Communion



Help Needed on Christmas Day

The Churches Together in Teddington are helping to provide lunch on Christmas Day for lonely and elderly people at Elleray Hall. Help is needed for:-

1. Transport for the guests to arrive between 10.30 and 11.30 am and leave at 3.30 pm.
2. Kitchen help from 9.00 am onwards. An hour or two would be useful.
3. Greeting and chatting to guests, and waiting at tables.
4. Providing Christmas cakes, for distribution at the end, and small presents.
5. Serving teas, washing up, and wrapping presents.

If you would like to help, please 'phone Stella or Trevor King on 977 3891 by 10th December if possible.

The Diocese of the Future

At a recent meeting of the Diocesan Synod, the Bishop of London spoke of the way in which he sees the diocese developing. The crisis in finance, caused largely by the huge losses sustained by the Church Commissioners, has major implications for our diocese. Costs, previously borne by them, will need to be met by the parishes. The diocesan Bishop spoke of his desire for 'a greater transparency in financial matters which is long overdue'.



In an attempt to deal with this problem, and, at the same time, to address the problem caused by the current diocesan area system, Bishop David suggests:-

- 1) The abandonment of the Area System; including Area Synods and Area Bishops' Councils.
- 2) A delay in appointing a Bishop of Kensington, so that when the current Bishop of Edmonton retires there will be the possibility of re-structuring episcopal (bishop's) duties and responsibilities. This infers a reduction in the number of bishops in the diocese.
- 3) Archdeacons, when appointed to the two current vacancies, will only be appointed for five years and without freehold. Again, this will allow for future changes in Archdeacons' duties and responsibilities.

Bishop David again pointed out that, as Bishop of London, he bears episcopal care and responsibility for all of us in the diocese and, at the moment, for parishes in the Kensington Episcopal Area in particular. This includes St. James', Hampton Hill.

Brian Leathard

A Return to Rouen

I have recently been on a few days holiday to Rouen where I was stationed for over two years from 1917 to 1919 as an ambulance driver.

The city itself has changed quite a lot, the old cathedral has been restored after Second World War damage and a new very modern cathedral has been built on the site where Joan of Arc was burnt. From the outside it looked most peculiar, but the inside, to me, was attractively simple.

I was very keen to see the place where most of the field hospitals had been built, the same main road was still there, running from one of the replaced bridges right up to the Elbeuf forest and beyond. En route was the race course, of which the grandstand was used as a hospital, and the grounds were covered with hospitals and camps. There were a few open spaces where I and many of my friends used to play mixed hockey and cricket.

Also along the road was the cemetery where I had taken many of those buried there. That was one of the jobs allocated to us in turn. Later on, in early 1918 when the Americans came into the war, a unit was formed with men and heavy trucks who took over that job, and we were occupied with convoys meeting train loads of wounded straight from the front, and distributing them around the different hospitals, many of the desperately sick men dying in our ambulances. I remember the frustration of not being able to help them.

Now the whole road is part of a complete new town, and what is more, a tram track has been laid from the centre of Rouen to the forest. The trams are very super, with trailers, and should soon take a tremendous amount of commuter traffic from the new town.

We visited the railway station where I first arrived in Rouen, and from which my husband-to-be departed with his battalion to Haifa. Also, I remember standing on the platform in 1918 saying good-bye to a battalion of new recruits, many of them only sixteen years old, on the way 'up to the front', many of them frightened and in tears, quite sure that they wouldn't return. What could one say to them? That is one memory I shall never forget, especially as I now have great grandsons at that age.

One great thrill of the journey was that my son, his wife and I were invited to travel on the Captain's bridge from Calais to Dover. That is something I will never forget - the kindness and care from everyone was really wonderful.

If only there was more love, understanding and tolerance in people's hearts, all hatred, bitterness and greed would disappear. What a much happier place the world would be.

Vivienne Prentice

Letter from Zimbabwe

17th September 1994: 'Green gardens are a European fetish . . .' said Philip, our first guest, as he surveyed the dry brown earth and few tough plants of our large garden with evident approval. Philip, an ex-colleague from UK, was paying us a visit from South Africa, his birthplace. He envied me, commenting how at home he felt in this relatively tension-free land of bright colours and warmth. He had to return first to an uneasy Johannesburg, then to an English autumn, and the stress of a new university year in October. I commented on the things that I find most uncomfortable here, the unemployment, the beggars, and the grossly uneven distribution of wealth. He was mildly surprised. 'Have you forgotten all these things in the UK?', he asked. 'But not as bad as this!', I said. 'Worse where I live in London', he replied.

I think we are developing Philip's view of the garden. We now employ a cheerful young man, Brian, as a gardener. He lives here with his new wife, and in a week or so has tidied the garden, clearing the piles of leaves and giving it a structure with paths and beds which contain the dry shrubs. Dry but surprisingly alive: although no rain has fallen since the beginning of the year, the dead-looking trees and shrubs are putting out green shoots or flowering. Bougainvillea blooms all the year round, blue jacaranda is just coming out. Each day the sky is brilliant blue and gold and the birds sing in the trees. At night after sunset we look at stars and planets in a clear dark sky.

It takes me about 15 minutes to drive to work. The Electronics Department is about 6 km from the centre of town, in buildings we share with ZESA, the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority. Our facilities and funds are very modest. Just two crowded classrooms, two sparsely-stocked laboratories, and at present two classes each of about 30 students. I am carrying a work-load which looks very heavy by UK standards. I am running three separate courses, and trying to operate each on a continuous assessment basis, which means setting lots of tests and doing lots of marking. However, there is a definition to the work which makes the job comfortable. I can plan my day knowing that the unscheduled hours are unlikely to be disturbed. This is a luxury almost unknown to me in the UK.

The students are mostly black Zimbabweans, with one or two Indians and two German visitors. Their technical standard is fair, about the level I would expect from a decent UK 'new university', or old polytechnic. The Zimbabweans all speak three languages, Shona, Ndebele and English. Their English is heavily accented and difficult for me to understand. I find it quite difficult to run my classes in the interactive way which suits me best. However, I think we are getting along together reasonably well so far. I hope so.

Dick Wilde

PARISH NIGHT

Fun and Fellowship for all ages

Every Friday (except 23rd and 30th December)

7 to 10 pm - Church Hall

Come and enjoy each other's company - for part or all of the evening

Bring your friends

The Early Church 15 Constantine the Great Part 3

In 321 Constantine enlisted Christian aid in the East against his co-emperor Licinius, who was a pagan. A crusading war left him sole ruler in 324. The Church in the East disappointed him; it was just as split by division as the West. Arius, presbyter of Alexandria, declared that 'The Son, Who is tempted, suffers, and dies, is not the equal of the immutable Father'; his bishop, Alexander, rebuked him strongly, but Arius had powerful support, not only from such as Eusebius the historian, but also amongst ordinary folk. Arius was something of a populist, a favourite amongst the young women and dockers of Alexandria, for whom he wrote sea shanties with religious overtones.

Constantine eventually called an important meeting, The Council of Nicaea, to settle the arguments. This is reckoned to be the first 'ecumenical' or world council, attended by 220 bishops, though only a few came from the West.

The Nicene Creed drawn up at this Council was anti-Arian, declaring that 'The Son is of one substance with the Father', and condemning any notions that the Son is in any way inferior to the Father. However, 'of one substance' was taken in different ways; did it mean 'personal, specific identity', or have a much more general meaning?

The Council also regularised the calculation of Easter time; forbade ambitious prelates to move from one see to another; and directed that a new bishop be consecrated by no fewer than three provincial bishops, with a power of veto by the metropolitan bishop of the province. This of course led to the concentration of authority in metropolitan bishops.

In 342 in the West, it was ruled that a court of appeal from a provincial synod should be presided over by judges appointed by the Pope. Some bishops brought disrepute on the church by continually petitioning the court for secular promotion for themselves or their friends. In the end, final decisions on church policy tended to be taken by the emperor; consequently rival church factions sought to gain his ear.

This article concludes the series on the Early Church.

Stuart Ward

God and the Big Bang -

Science and Faith at the end of the 20th Century

Members of the parish who have attended the three talks given by Stuart Ward on Sunday evenings would like to express their very grateful thanks to him. He has applied his skills and interests, and hard work, in preparing and delivering three fascinating evenings. They have been a challenge and a stimulus to our faith and our way of looking at the world. Thank you Stuart.

Open House

Perhaps you may have wondered when you read the weekly notice sheets in church, exactly what is 'Open House - Coffee and Chat', an invitation offered to all at 10.30 am every Monday and Friday. For some years now, coffee and companionship have been available every Monday morning from 10.30 until noon in the children's corner in church - the venue has been changed to the Church Hall, but the welcome is the same! People drop in for ten minutes, or for an hour, for a snatched coffee, or a prolonged chat, to meet friends, to have a good grumble or discussion.

Now the same service is available also on Friday mornings and we are looking forward to seeing more friends - whether you're a 'regular' or you've never yet come for 'coffee and chat', drop in some Monday or Friday and see who else is there! Offers to help prepare the coffee will also be welcomed, especially for Fridays - your turn will come round only every four or five weeks.

Margaret Taylor



The Confirmation - An Apology

In saying how everyone enjoyed the supper party following the Confirmation on 11 October, we should have made it clear that thanks were due to all of the parents of those confirmed and to other friends for the delicious food. Diane's mother provided two splendid confirmation cakes which were shared by all.

Stewardship

In the twelve months ending 30 September, giving under the Stewardship Scheme totalled £32,509, a little up on the giving during the preceding twelve months. In the calendar year 1993, giving came to £31,973, and we had hoped for a considerable increase on that amount in 1994, but it now seems that giving will only be up by a modest amount.

Writing your Will?

Following our piece about Will Aid last month, you may have been thinking about writing your will. If so, please bear in mind the needs of your parish church and consider making a bequest in its favour. Its needs are great and are not likely to decrease in the foreseeable future as the whole of the Church of England tries to adapt to new financial circumstances.

And, if you make such a bequest, please avoid too restrictive wording which can cause problems to beneficiaries.

A Time for Quiet

The soul has need to seek a quiet time
Wherein all thought must leave this world and climb
To Father God, to be still and know and rest in Him
Lest lack of contact make His light grow dim.
The world clamours and in the busy market place
It's easy to be deafened to the murmurs of God's grace.

Margery Orton

The Young Church - One Year Old

On 20th November, we celebrated our first anniversary with a party. The past year has been interesting and successful, starting in the vestry with twelve members. Then we moved to the vicarage while Brian was away, and now we are well settled in the 'Upper Room' of our new hall.



Subjects studied during the year included: Heroes; the Prophet Amos; the Roman Empire; Laws and Rules; Parables; Slavery; the early chapters of Genesis; The Assyrians; Children in the Nineteenth Century. Brian, Helen and Elizabeth Gossage have visited us.

We have quizzes on what we've studied, and read and act lots of short plays.

We plan to adopt a charity for one year, and then choose another; this year we're supporting the Leprosy Mission.

During Lent next year, the Young Church will be presenting a short play in church each Sunday, telling the story of the days leading up to the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus.

We've increased to nineteen members, but are an outward-looking group, and warmly welcome newcomers. Do you know anyone from 11 to 14+ who'd like to join? We meet on Sunday mornings.

Stuart

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God and the Big Bang

Do not miss the last of three talks by Stuart Ward:

'GOD - WHAT DO WE MEAN?'

St. James's Church Hall, Sunday 4th December, 8 pm.

Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity

Applications are invited for financial assistance for 'persons in need, hardship or distress and those sick, convalescent, disabled, handicapped or infirm'. Forms, with more details of the Grant Scheme, are available from the Vicar. They should be returned to him before the end of the year,

Applications may also be made for financial assistance for certain other charitable purposes. Appropriate forms, with details, may be obtained from the Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity, PO Box 38, Hampton, TW12 2TA.

Around the Spire

As the Christmas season approaches the sound of schoolchildren will be heard again in church as they rehearse for, and take part in, their School Carol Services. It is good that the church is used in this way, so to everyone who will be involved in these activities, whether as performer, instructor or audience, we welcome you and hope you will enjoy the special atmosphere that such a building adds to these occasions.

Of course, it is not only the schools who are welcome in church at Christmas or any other time - to everyone who will worship with us - WE WELCOME YOU.

Just after Christmas we have two other special occasions. Margaret and Tony Lawrance will celebrate their Ruby Wedding Anniversary on 27th December and Chrissie Hockley will have her 90th birthday party in the Church Hall on 31st December. We send our love and best wishes to the Lawrances and to Chrissie. Anyone who would like to help Chrissie celebrate her birthday is welcome to come to the party, starting at 3 pm.

Congratulations to the Nettleton family on the arrival of baby Olivia, we hope they are all well and happy.

Two groups that meet for study and fellowship would welcome new members. One group meets at Jean Western's house on alternate Wednesday mornings, the other group meets in the Church Hall on alternate Tuesday evenings at 8 pm. Details of the groups can be obtained from their leaders, Jean Western and Alan Taylor, or from the Vicar.

Many people at St. James's will remember Stan Childs, for many years Group Scout Leader of our cubs and scouts. Stan died recently aged 87 years down in Devon where he had lived for the last few years with Michael and Yvonne. To them and all the rest of the family we send our love. Love and condolences also to Pat Mitchell and the McEvoy family who have both suffered bereavements recently. Please remember all these people and those who are ill in your prayers.



From the Registers - October

Baptism

9 Charlotte Rosemary Burton 74 Park Road

Marriage

15 Frank Richard George Hicks and Joyce Kathleen Page

Funeral

17 Eva Frances Handford 39 St. James's Avenue

Dates to Note

Dec.	1	18.30	The WCRP Memorial Lecture in memory of Hannah Stanton and Gordon Wilson: 'Faith and Peace' by Rabbi Dr. Norman Solomon, Birmingham Cathedral
	4	9.30	Christingle Service
		20.00	'God - What do we mean?': Third talk by Stuart Ward on Science and Faith, Church Hall
	5	14.00	Editorial Board, 19 St. James's Road
	6	20.15	Stewardship Committee, 16 Cranmer Road
	7	14.30	Women's Forum, Church Hall
	8	14.00	Lady Eleanor Hollis Junior School Carol Service
	12	13.45	Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Service
		19.30	Lady Eleanor Hollis Senior School Carol Service
	13	19.00	Hampton Hill Junior School Carol Service
	15	19.30	Rectory School Carol Service
	18	18.30	Parish Carol Service
	21	20.00	Women's Forum, Church Hall

**See also Christmas Services
on earlier page**



25	Christmas Day
26	St. Stephen the first Martyr
27	St. John the Evangelist
28	The Holy Innocents

Advance Notices

Jan.	2	The Naming of Jesus
	4	20.00 Women's Forum, Church Hall
	6	The Epiphany
	18	20.00 Women's Forum, Church Hall

COPY DATE FOR JANUARY ISSUE: 11 DECEMBER