

While our Vicar, Brian, is away on his Sabbatical, different people are to write a 'leader' each month. This month we also include the first of a number of newsletters which we hope to receive from Brian.

On 2 February, the church celebrates the Presentation of Christ in the Temple. His parents brought the infant Jesus to Jerusalem to be consecrated to the Lord. Prompted by the Spirit, Simeon, a devout, elderly man, came to the temple and, realising who the child was, took him in his arms, blessed God, and said:

Lord now you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.
My own eyes have seen the salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of every people;
a light to reveal you to the nations,
and the glory of your people Israel.

Jesus was acknowledged to be the light of not just the Jews but of all peoples.

The festival is also known as Candlemas, and for us in the northern hemisphere, at the time of what is often the worst of the winter, it is cheering to celebrate the coming of the Light of the World with candles in the darkness of winter.

There is much darkness in all parts of the world - the darkness of bitter struggles between peoples, often between Christian peoples, the darkness of the resultant devastation and destruction of normal life patterns, the darkness of starvation and the darkness of extreme poverty, often a consequence of unfair trading practices between the more developed and the less developed parts of the world. There is also the darkness of loneliness in many homes around us. Christ came to bring light to all peoples. What do we do, as his followers, to fight against these darknesses?

Much of our last issue was devoted to appreciations of Hannah Stanton. To go some way towards completing the picture, we say more in this issue about her work with those of other faiths for peace throughout the world. Hannah showed what can be done to reflect some of the light of Christ into the dark corners and dark situations of the world, whether in this international work for peace, or as an almoner in Liverpool, or in the refugee camps of Austria, or in her beloved Africa or in Hampton Hill.

In the words of the hymn by J.R.Peacey:

Awake, awake: fling off the night!
for God has sent his glorious light;
And we who live in Christ's new day
must work of darkness put away.

From the Vicar in Sri Lanka

I'm writing this on New Year's Eve at 11.45 am - that is 6.15 am in Hampton Hill. The temperature is 29°C and will go on rising until after lunch. Although Christianity is a minority faith in this country, nevertheless the period from Christmas to New Year is one of great celebration, among people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds. 65% of the population here are Buddhists - and Buddhist temples and statues are, like our churches, on every road and street corner. Unlike our churches, however, they are always open and one can see people resting, praying, offering flowers or fruit in worship, at all times of the day. 20% of the population are Hindus and their temples - identifiable by bright ornate carvings - can be found in every centre of population, but especially in the North and East of the country, on the Tea Estates and in the bigger towns and cities. The remainder of the population is almost evenly split between Muslims, who make up 8% of the inhabitants and are mainly in the coastal belt and cities, and Christians who are about 7% of the population. Of the Christians, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest and the Church of Ceylon - the Anglican Church - numbers about 1% of the population of an island of 17 million people.



So on Christmas Day, after Parish Communion at 7.30 am (!) and all the excitement of presents and gifts, it was a thrill to be visited by Muslim friends, to give and receive gifts from Hindu family members and to share our Christmas lunch with Buddhist family friends. In a country where painful divisions - of poverty, race and religion - can and do lead to suspicion and violence, the birth of the Prince of Peace, as a vulnerable child, can also prove a time to share our common humanity in giving and receiving to and from each other.

By the time you read this, Lent will be fast approaching - and Christmas long forgotten - but perhaps that is a good time to contemplate on the unity and divisions in our own lives - in families, at work, in church and community. And in such contemplation ask what Christ's life and death and resurrection can mean in God's divided world.

Brian Leathard

Lent Groups

Plans are now well under way for the Lent Groups to start on Monday 21st February. The groups are being organised on an ecumenical basis by the Hampton Council of Churches and all ten member churches will be taking part.

It is hoped to have groups meeting at different venues throughout the area on each weekday evening, and some day-time groups as well.

Lists will be displayed in each church on the three Sundays prior to the commencement of Lent. This year's course is entitled 'Have Another Look' and the idea is to encourage people both inside and outside the church to take a fresh look at the Christian faith and what it means for us today.

People will be allocated to a group meeting at the time in the week which they have specified (as far as possible). This is a good opportunity to study the Christian faith more deeply and to meet a different group of people. Please come yourselves and encourage others to join - it should be a valuable experience.

Helen Taylor



Re-licensing of Readers

On Thursday evening, 2nd December, nine of us went to St. Paul's Cathedral for the London Diocesan quinquennial re-licensing of Readers, which also included the admission of some new Readers. There was a real sense of occasion in the splendid and spacious setting whilst we waited, in anticipation, first for the arrival of those others who had come to support Alan Taylor, who has given unstinted service to the parish for sixteen years, and then for the procession of Readers, followed by the clergy and bishops. From the great number of Readers of both sexes who were there, it was evident that many lay people give their time both to several years of study and, also, to a continuing stint of service in their parishes, in addition to their daily work.

The magnificent organ provided wonderful music during the processions, and then the Dean welcomed the congregation. During the service, there were seven short readings based around the Advent Antiphons. The sermon was preached by the Bishop of London, who took for his text 'He made my tongue his sharp sword' (Isaiah 49.2). Then the new Readers were presented by their area wardens, and afterwards the Readers to be re-licensed stood to affirm their faith and give obedience to the Lord Bishop of London. The new candidates knelt in turn before the Bishop to receive their certificates,

after which all the Readers stood to make their commitment and to receive the Bishop's authority to work as Readers in the diocese, and his blessing. The service drew to its conclusion with intercessions and hymns, before the Readers went with their area bishops to receive their licences or letters of authorisation.

Jean Western

Hannah Stanton - A Further Tribute

Hannah was 'so committed, so loyal, so true' in following Christ 'that she could rejoice and delight in the sharing of other people's journeying to God in other religious traditions . . . ' So said Brian in his address at Hannah's funeral. Rabbi Albert Friedlander, with whom she and Canon Gordon Wilson worked in the World Conference of Religions for Peace and the Week of Prayer for World Peace, writes in an obituary for 'The Guardian' of Hannah's service as Secretary of the WCRP/UK for many years and of her being its 'dynamic centre'. He also writes 'Much of her best work in religious reconciliation was done quietly, outside of public notice. Yet it would be wrong to view her as a "still, small voice". She could be fierce and firm in the pursuit of justice; and she inspired most workers in that field'.

In 'The Spire', she herself wrote in Gordon Wilson's obituary, 'When I joined the group as Secretary in 1979, I felt as if I had entered a new world where I got to know members of other faiths as friends and as dearly loved companions in this search for world peace'.

An example of the way in which the WCRP has a voice in international affairs occurred when UNICEF asked the WCRP to meet and prepare a Declaration to go forward to a UNICEF Conference of World Heads of State on the Rights of the Child. The WCRP meeting was held in July 1990 in Princeton, New Jersey, and Hannah, as a recently appointed Hon. President of the WCRP, took part.

Hannah's work in the anti-apartheid movement has already been covered but, as pointed out in the obituary in 'The Times', she was also active in the CND. Whether it was taking part in one of the huge demonstration marches in London or placing floating candles on the Thames in commemoration of, and repentance for, the thousands who died when the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Hannah was there.

As she was deported from South Africa in 1960, an African priest called out 'Thanda bantu, Lover of the People. Go well.' A very appropriate farewell.

Ron Bridges

As we go to press, Hannah's brother, Tom, is about to return to South Africa. May God be with him.

We apologise for the poor quality of the photographs in our last issue. This reflected the poor quality of the prints used. Editor

Parish Quiet Day

On Saturday 6 November, we visited St. Michael's Convent at Ham for our Parish Quiet Day. Our Vicar, Brian, leading the day, had chosen to use the poetry of George Herbert, 1993 seeing the 400th anniversary of the poet's birth. We were given much food for thought. The limits of my own mind were meagre indeed compared with what was on offer here. We were being asked to think again. Did we feel that we needed to turn to Christ, to repent of our sins, to say Yes to Christ? How could we do this individually or as a community? How could we serve Christ in the world? In short, how could we become 'dressed' in Christ? Heaven it was said was often to be found in the ordinary. I remembered how I had thought, on my day alone at the Convent, about shining where one is placed, doing one's best with a heart of love. 'There is nothing that cannot be transformed' said Brian - transformed by God's glory. I thought of the ancient, gnarled mulberry tree in the convent garden seemingly dead and fruitless, and then remembered that it still blossoms and produces fruit. Like the tree, we are here to sing God's praises in all of our life - 'to do what is just, to show constant love and to live in humble fellowship with our God.'

Janet Jeffries

27th February is the day on which the church celebrates George Herbert, Priest, Pastor and Poet. George Herbert who died in 1633 just before his fortieth birthday, maintained a life-long friendship with John Donne, through whom he turned his mind to religion. He was ordained and became prebendary of Leighton Bromswold in Huntingdonshire, near to Little Gidding where a Cambridge friend had recently established the religious community. His last years were spent as rector of Bemerton, a country parish near Salisbury, where he would appear with all his family twice a day at Church prayers. There he gained a reputation for humility, energy and charity, caring for the needs of ordinary people and seeing heaven in the commonplace. One of his poems in a col lection, 'The Church', is entitled, 'The Windows':

Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?
He is a brittle crazy glass:
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.

But when thou dost anneal in glass thy story,
Making thy life to shine within
The holy Preacher's; then the light and glory
More rev'rend grows, and more doth win:
Which else shows wat'rish, bleak and thin.

Doctrine and life, colours and light, in one
When they combine and mingle, bring
A strong regard and awe: but speech alone
Doth vanish like a flaring thing.
And in the ear, not conscience ring.

The Early Church 6 The Second Century continued

In 64ad a great fire destroyed most of Rome. By this time Nero, due to both moral and fiscal excesses, was highly unpopular, and was suspected of causing the fire himself, so that he could rebuild the city to his own grandiose designs. He found a scapegoat in the Christians. Tacitus the historian, writing about 115ad, didn't believe the Christians were justly accused, but saw no harm in an 'anti-social' group, 'hated for their vices', being executed. By his time, christians were popularly supposed to practise incest and cannibalism, (possibly by a misinterpretation of language about universal: love and the eucharist).

The emperor Domitian (87-96) styled himself 'Master and God'. Both jews and christians refused to take the oath 'By the genius of the emperor'. The Revelation of Jjohn, probably written at this time, reflects the tension in the churches of Asia Minor, caused by Rome, the scarlet woman, drunk with the blood of saints.

Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor at the beginning of the second century, asked the emperor Trajan for guidance in dealing with christians. According to his letter, the new 'cult' was widely spread; pagan temples were empty, the meat of sacrificial animals unsaleable. Due to local protest, he had executed a few christians who weren't Romans, keeping those who were, to be sent to Rome for trial. But he was puzzled about what crimes they'd committed; was it a crime, he asked Trajan, merely to be a christian?

In Trajan's reply, he thought Pliny had acted sensibly, but he shouldn't take any notice of anonymous accusations, not organise a general inquisition. If a proper charge was brought, then the person accused of christianity could be tried, and punished if found guilty. If he showed he wasn't a christian, by offering prayers to the gods, he could be pardoned. It was clear Trajan didn't consider christians to be a threat, though he didn't answer Pliny's question (Trajan wasn't keen on being referred to as a god himself, unlike Domitian). The emperor Hadrian wrote to the proconsul at Ephesus in 123ad on the same lines. However, christianity remained a capital offence - Ignatius of Antioch, old Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, and Justin were all martyred between 162 and 168.

A possible good point in Roman law was that if accusations were judged unfounded, then the accuser was given the punishment he'd sought for the accused, which put a brake on wild and hysterical allegations.

To be continued.

Stuart Ward



A Meditation for the New Year

'Fear not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord which He will show you today' (Exodus 14.13, Authorised Version). The Revised Version has it '... which He will work for you today'. The New International Bible says 'Do not be afraid, stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you this day'. The Jerusalem Bible puts it 'you will see what Jahweh will do to save you this day'. Great words for every new day.

So: we are not to be afraid; we are to be still; we are to stand firm and God will manifest Himself to us, work for us, deliver and save us.

Every day 'they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength'. 'Come' He says 'and I will refresh you'. It is a promise of God, but we have to come. God will do, already has done, and is doing, many things involved in our salvation. He will guide us, love us, bless us, show us, lead us in His way. He will let us find Him if we seek Him, but we must seek. He will let us feel Him near us in our stillness, in the joy and wonder of His creation. He truly strengthens those that wait on Him faithfully day by day. He will release us from our bonds, setting us free from them, lifting us above them, sustaining us, enriching us, keeping us in His care, calming us and bringing us peace, and joy in Him. He is truly 'a very present help in time of trouble'. He will restore our poor souls when they are sick (I for one can, and do, witness to the truth of this). He will, if we earnestly desire it, become our pearl of great price, our treasure, the heart of our hearts. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . ' He tells us 'and all these things shall be added unto you'.

Finally, in my quiet time, I turned to the Good News Bible: 'Hold your ground' we are told (there is to be no backsliding) 'and you will see what the Lord will do to save you today'

Dear Lord: Help us to see Thee more clearly, to love Thee more dearly, to follow Thee more nearly, day by day. Amen.

Margery Orton

Stewardship

Stewardship giving in the last two years was as follows:

	<u>1993</u>	<u>1992</u>
January - March	£ 8,474	£ 7,501
April - June	£ 8,098	£ 7,065
July - September	£ 7,457	£ 6,888
October - December	<u>£ 7,944</u>	<u>£ 7,335</u>
Total for year	£31,973	£28,789

Tax refunds on covenanted giving were: £ 8,888 and £ 7,561
so that the total incomes were: £40,861 and £36,350

Round Robins

With the Christmas card comes the 'Round Robin'. Some people object to this form of communication as being too impersonal but I rather like it. It brings family news which probably would otherwise not be known. Of the half dozen or so we received, two or three came from families well known to many at St. James's, and so are worthy of a wider audience.

The first was from Dawn and Seymour Harris. Seymour is a Vicar of three parishes on the Kent/Sussex border at Wittersham. Prior to that he was Priest-in-charge at St. Michael and St. George, Fulwell, and before that a Reader at St. James's. Of their children, Simon is married and Frances lives in Teddington. Jonathan and Matthew, are teenagers living at home and keen QPR supporters.

Because of the Church of England's decision to ordain women to the priesthood, Seymour feels he can no longer stay in that Church, and is seeking to become a priest in the Greek Orthodox Church. This is obviously a big step to take and has far-reaching implications for all the family. They will have to leave the vicarage and buy a house, and because the parish system doesn't exist in the Greek Orthodox Church, Seymour will have to return to work as a pharmacist.

Whether or not we agree with his views, it doesn't take much imagination to see what a difficult and painful time this must be for them. Please remember them and pray that the transition may be a smooth and happy one.

And now, as they say, for something completely different. This time the Round Robin was from Ann and Graham Douglas. Ann came to speak to the women's groups in the summer. She is a deacon working in a parish at Chorleywood. Graham is a civilian police worker in Pimlico. Their two daughters, Fiona and Zoe, are teenagers.

Ann is hoping to become a priest when the first round of women being ordained priest takes place in her diocese of St. Alban's. She has been offered a living on the outskirts of Watford/Carpenters Park, so she is very excited about that. The parish church, which was built in the 1950's, is unusable because of asbestos in the roof and there is not enough money to put that right. However, there are various possibilities and several other buildings so Ann feels quite hopeful that something can be done. This will also entail a move for Ann and family but they are very excited at the prospect. We pray for them too.

We also heard from Hazel and John Reece in Hereford, where John has two churches; from Raymond and Gill Draper in Wickersley, near Rotherham, where Raymond has been Rector for some years and has taken up the cause of the unemployed; and from Hilde and Roger Bucknell down in Somerset. Hilde teaches German, mostly to businessmen, and Roger, when not looking after his 35 sheep, is getting hooked on local history. Their children are all well and busy.

Helen Taylor

Visiting

Our Vicar, Brian, when he is at home, is always happy to visit anyone in the parish when there is a special need or when a parishioner would like a visit from him especially. But there may be many occasions when some other visitor from the church would be welcome for a particular reason or just for a chat.

If you would like a visitor to come to see you, please let David Taylor (977 1342, 5 Oxford Road, Teddington) know and he will try to arrange it for you.

If you would like to help as a visitor, then again let David have your name. Hopefully, he will be able to have a number of visitors to draw on to provide this service in different parts of the parish.

Please do not be shy either about asking for a visit or offering your services as a visitor.



From the Registers - November

Funeral

We regret that the following entry was given incorrectly in our last issue

23 James D. Unsted 2 School Road Avenue Aged 75

From the Registers - December

Baptisms

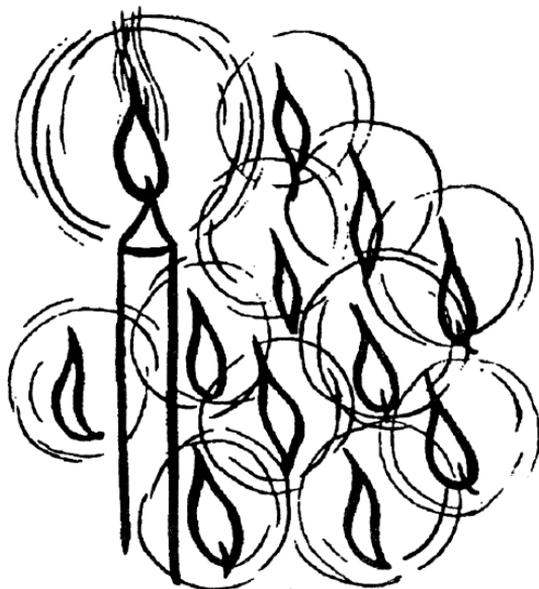
5 Oliver Frederick Robins 15a Wilton Gardens, East Molesey

Marriage

4 Martin Robert Wood Topping and Heidi Jane Blouddyn

Funerals

2	Annie Dorothy White	3 Myrtle Road	Aged 98
7	Eliza Elizabeth Quartermain	49 Rectory Grove	Aged 87
9	Olga Stead	243 Uxbridge Road	Aged 63
14	Hannah Margaret Stanton	30 Burtons Road	Aged 80
22	John Michael Sanders	30 Cranmer Road	Aged 76



Dates to Note

Feb.	2		The Presentation of Christ in the Temple
		14.30	Women's Forum, Any Answers?, Church
	7	14.00	Editorial Board, 19 St. James's Road
	15	20.00	P.C.C., Vestry
	16		Ash Wednesday
		20.00	Parish Communion with Imposition of Ashes
	21		Start of Lent Groups

Advance Notices

Mar.	2	14.30	Women's Forum, Save the Children talk, Church
	4	14.30	Women's World Day of Prayer,
	&	20.00	United Reformed Church, Hampton Hill
	6	09.30	Parish Communion (not Informal Service)
	7	14.00	Editorial Board, 19 St. James's Road
	13	09.30	Mothering Sunday - Children's Eucharist and Parade Service
	16	20.00	Women's Forum, Easter Music, Church
	27		Palm Sunday
		18.30	Readings and Music for Holy Week

COPY DATE FOR MARCH ISSUE: 13 FEBRUARY