

Choosing Christmas presents is never easy. If you think of buying a book there is always the possibility the recipient has read it. If you decide on an article of clothing there is the problem of the right size and an appropriate colour. Don't get me wrong - I'm certainly no spoil-sport - I am just as caught up in the approaching Christmas whirl as anyone else. I do really think that we should be caught up in the excitement - the tinsel, the pudding, the cards, the drinks and the mince pies of celebration because all these things give expression to our great joy and our great commitment to God who identifies with us. As John Betjeman wrote:

That God was Man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

If we do believe that in Jesus, born in obscurity and fleeing as a refugee to Egypt, we find a picture of God totally human, then in every human life today we can see God. The stuff of our Christmas celebrations must celebrate God's gift to us and God in us. That was even one of the names given to Jesus. The prophets said he would be called 'God with us' - Emmanuel. That really is something to celebrate - with all the joy and energy we can bring.

But the crux of the matter is this amazing generosity of God, this gesture of the creator becoming one with humanity, this gift of the vulnerable baby in the manger. Our celebrations, if true, must also display that same generosity, not only in our family circles or within our group of friends. Like God's generosity we must reply with gifts to the unknown, the obscure, the disadvantaged, the marginalised. In its recent publicity material Crisis has dropped the second part of its title. It used to be called Crisis at Christmas, but just as the evil of homelessness and poverty is a curse in our city all year round, so too must be our generous celebration of God who is known in you or me, or in the nameless stranger.

Can we try to be generous this Christmas, not only with each other but also beyond our own known circles. Remember that generosity doesn't just mean spending money. Crisis needs volunteers, help, human contact; Teddington Christian Council needs transporters, people to cook and wash up on Christmas Day; lonely neighbours need company. If we can't react with such activity we can be generous in attention, informing ourselves, committing such work in prayer.

Come and join our celebrations at St. James's - you will be most welcome. Full details of services appear in this magazine.

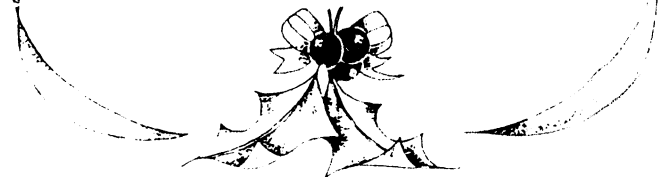
Brian Leathard

P.S. My hot tip for a Christmas present this year is a trip to the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum: it is called Gates of Mystery: the Art of Holy Russia and runs till 3 January 1994. Stunningly beautiful treasures bid us enter into the mystery of God becoming man and our generous reply. That is the mystery these treasures have communicated to faithful pilgrims for hundreds of years whether in Russian churches or South Ken. And this window onto God will only cost £3.75 (£2.50 concessions) - a snip for a view into eternity!

Christmas Services

Sunday 19 December	8.00 am	Holy Communion
	9.30 am	Parish Communion
	6.30 pm	PARISH CAROL SERVICE
Monday 20	9.15 am	Morning Prayer
Tuesday 21	9.15 am	Morning Prayer
	9.30 am	Holy Communion
Wednesday 22	9.15 am	Morning Prayer
Thursday 23	9.15 am	Morning Prayer
CHRISTMAS EVE	9.15 am	Morning Prayer
Friday 24	4.30 pm	CHILDREN'S CRIB SERVICE
	11.45 pm	MIDNIGHT EUCHARIST
CHRISTMAS DAY	8.00 am	Holy Communion
Saturday 25	9.30 am	Parish Communion
First Sunday after Christmas		
Sunday 26	9.30 am	Parish Communion

Come and worship
Christ the New-Born King



Well, you did ask!.....

Most people in the parish community have heard that the Vicar is doing something different (taking a sabbatical) in early 1994. Here he answers a few of your questions.

What is a sabbatical? Every seven years the diocese encourages clergy to step outside their usual work and ministry and spend time doing something different. 'Sabbatical' comes from the Old Testament idea of the 'sabbath', the seventh day or year, which is special and different to the other six. It is a sort of in-service training, to develop and stretch your experience, give you time to reflect on your work thus far, introduce you to something new and to re-charge your batteries for the next stage of your ministry back in the parish.

What are you going to do? I am going to do two distinct things. For part of the time I shall be teaching at the Theological College of Sri Lanka. This institute trains all Anglican, Methodist, Baptist and Dutch Reformed Church clergy. It also joins with a Roman Catholic Seminary and Buddhist Monastery in teaching pastoral care and in practical placements. The College is just outside Kandy, the hill capital of Sri Lanka.

For the remainder of the time I shall be meeting and listening to people who work in inter-faith areas. In Sri Lanka, the Christian community is a small minority and I want to find out what it feels like to be in the minority, so that on my return, I will be more aware of the feelings, concerns and contributions of minority faith communities here.

Are you coming back? Yes! I have no plans at all other than to return to Hampton Hill.

Are you all going? Yes. Ramani will be on leave of absence from Christian Aid and will be working with one of Christian Aid's partners, the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka. They are currently looking for assistance with the work of their Development Commission in a community health project in Colombo and a Cooperative Fruit and Vegetable production scheme in rural villages in the South of the island. She will also be doing voluntary work in a Tamil Refugee Camp in Colombo.

Anusha will be taught her National Curriculum subjects in Colombo and is looking forward to getting to know her extended family, and swimming in a very warm ocean! (And visiting the Elephant Orphanage, she says!)

What happens to us? The Rev. David Bonner (17 St. James's Road, tel. : 979 1565) will have pastoral care of the parish. David is much loved and respected in our parish. Please contact him, as you would contact me, over any pastoral matter - visiting, illness, bereavement, baptisms, marriages, funerals. Services will continue on the current pattern while I'm away. The Churchwardens, Margaret Taylor and Ruth Mills, continue with their responsibilities throughout the period. They too, will be delighted to help or listen to you. Don't hesitate to contact them.

Brian Leathard

The Parish Diary

A parish diary for 1994 is now on the table at the west end of the church (by the hymn book cupboard). Please enter any dates of meetings or whatever that may be relevant to others in the parish so that all may be aware of what is happening and so that clashes may be avoided.

The Office of Reader

There is a Brownie song 'A Brownie's day is a happy day and busy from morn till eve, and all things that a Brownie does, you really wouldn't believe'. I can't help thinking that for 'Brownie' one could substitute 'Reader'. The Church of England allows Readers (we used to call them 'Lay Readers' and the first one that I can remember in St. James's Church was Mr. Thomas, Vera Rockcliffe's father) to: visit the sick, teach in Sunday School and 'elsewhere', do general pastoral and educational work, and to assist the minister 'as the bishop may direct'.

He/She is allowed to read services, preach, read banns, distribute the bread and wine at communion, but not, of course, consecrate them, nor to pronounce the Absolution. He may not marry your daughter (not only in Alan's case, because Helen might object!) nor baptise your baby, but you may invite him to bury your granny.

Now all this is done in his spare time and for the most part at his own expense. One might well wonder how anyone would want to take the job on. I don't know what influenced Alan Taylor's or Hannah Stanton's decision to become a Reader - perhaps, like me, they wanted to give what they could to a Church from which they had received so much. However, everyone must be aware of how much they do in the church and parish.

I have just started on the path to becoming a Reader and currently await the Bishop's approval to begin the three year training - or not - having been interviewed by seven people on four occasions, not including the P.C.C. (who have to give their approval and support to any candidate) and Brian. It is vital that the Reader can work with the Vicar as he is licensed to a particular incumbent in a particular parish. When the Vicar changes, the Reader must be relicensed to the new Vicar - assuming they want to work together.

In any case relicensing happens every five years - in Advent. This is the year and the service takes place in St. Paul's Cathedral on Thursday 2 December. Alan will be there and will appreciate the support of members of the parish that he serves so well. Please come at 7.30 pm and show him how much he is appreciated. And please let the Vicar know if you would like to come, especially if you would like, or can provide, transport.

(I don't think it's any secret that Hannah is over 70 - retirement age for Readers, but she has annual permission to continue so she does not have to be relicensed.)

The New Hall

The main hall structure is now rapidly taking shape, and work is only slightly behind programme.

We shall be able to 'rejoice greatly' on Sunday 12 December when there will be the 'topping out'. The brief outdoor ceremony will take place after the Parish Communion, then we shall return to the church to toast the new Hall and to raise our glasses together to the future life and development of the work of St. James's Church. Please make sure that you are there to share in the great occasion.

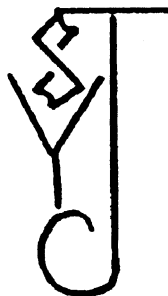
Jack Gostling and Margaret Taylor

St. James' Young Church

This exciting new group had its first meeting in the vestry on Sunday 14 November at 9.30 am.

The group is for young people, roughly from 11 - 14 years. The group leader is Stuart, who wrote and produced 'Dawnlight' and 'The Song of the Hill'.

If you fall into this age group, come along and find out more about your faith - its meaning for today, and how it grew in the past. Talks, discussions, quizzes and plays. We meet every Sunday at 9.30 am in the vestry, except the first Sunday in the month and school holidays. Next meeting: Sunday 12 December, 9.30 am in the vestry of the church. See you there!



Stuart Ward

Christingle

This year the Christingle Service will be held on Sunday 5 December at 9.30 am. This is always a popular and happy service, which we all enjoy together, thinking especially of our children and their joy in the world at Christmas-time. The collection is given to the Children's Society who do so much to bring comfort, help and joy to less fortunate young people; their work is very much needed today and on this occasion we have the opportunity to contribute. The oranges will be prepared on Saturday 4 December in the afternoon and if you could spare an hour or so, please speak to me (977 1342),

Margaret Taylor

CRISIS will be trying even more extensively this year to help the homeless all around the country. Four Open Christmas Shelters will be offered in London, including a women-only facility and two 'quiet sites'. Nearly 2,000 volunteers will be helping to provide good food, entertainment and clothing, and dentists, doctors and chiropodists will be available.



WORKING FOR HOMELESS PEOPLE

The Greek philosopher Plato (c.400bc) taught a duality - that evil is material, and good is spiritual: the good spirit pervades evil matter, and is in constant conflict with it. Fatalist myths told of the repeated reincarnation of the soul in body after body; the soul was trapped in matter, which it sought to escape. On the margins of Judaism some rabbis read secret meanings into the bible, and dabbled in magic and numerology. Some human beings have always desired to be members of an 'inner circle', to possess knowledge denied to the 'ordinary' citizen.

In the 2nd Century these beliefs and traditions came together under the heading of Gnosticism, (from the greek work meaning 'to know'). The main body of the Christian church rejected Gnosticism, on two grounds. First, the Redeemer is the Creator, who made both world and heaven, and all that is in them. The physical world, therefore, though fallen away from God's grace, is not intrinsically evil, but has a positive, good purpose, which is to be restored by redemption. In God's world matter and spirit are not the duality of Plato or Gnosticism. Secondly, the Gnostics believed that salvation depended, not on one's acceptance of God's Word, but on predestination, whereby one's salvation or damnation was already determined, and one could do nothing about it.

The theory of predestination recurs in later centuries. It is really an attempt to reason about God's eternal purposes. But for humans to attempt to compress Eternity into our finite world and thought can only result in perverse nonsense. God can do it, and has done it, in the person of Jesus Christ. But, as the book of Job teaches, the eternal purposes of the Almighty are not susceptible to finite human reasoning.

Justin Martyr Justin was born early in the 2nd century of Greek parents living in Samaria. He first studied philosophy - one of his teachers disillusioned him by an unphilosophical anxiety about his fees. He went, unsatisfied, from teacher to teacher until, while wandering deep in thought by the seashore, he met an old man who taught him about the prophets of the Old Testament, and their foretelling of Christ's coming. Justin was converted, but regarded Christianity as 'the true philosophy', and wore the accepted garb of a philosopher when teaching.

He rigorously rejected pagan cults and myth, but sought to interpret the old philosophies in harmony with Christianity, instancing how Socrates rejected the old, corrupt religions, and was sentenced to death by the Athenians for his integrity - a model for a christian martyr.

Justin argued that the light all men have is implanted by Divine Reason - the Logos, or Word of God which was incarnate in Jesus, and is universally active in goodness and intelligence wherever they are to be found. He says that Abraham and Socrates were 'Christians before Christ'. For him, the insights of the Greek philosophers reach their completion in the gospel of Christ.

To be continued.

Stuart Ward

Children and the Church

I was very surprised and pleased to hear lately that the number of children on the Sunday School roll is now about 40, thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of the teachers guided for many years by Debbie Nunn and now under the guidance of Lou Coaker. This large number makes it difficult to accommodate everybody on Sunday mornings; there are too many for the Portacabin so other places are used as well and the children come together in the Portacabin for a farewell prayer before the end of the session, when some go home and some join the congregation in church.

As you know, Stuart Ward has started a group for older children (roughly 11 to 14) called the 'St. James's Young Church' and they are meeting in the Vestry at 9.30 am for teaching and discussion, before coming into church. We are very grateful to Stuart for this initiative, as we are also to Ruth Mills whose Sunday evening gatherings for teenagers in the Portacabin are proving very popular. Other members of the congregation are helping to 'host' these meetings and we are sure that they will become a regular and happy part of our witness here at St. James's.

Parents of pre-school age children will be interested to know that Sue Blay has started a group, Noah's Ark, which is meeting on Fridays in the Portacabin from 10.30 - 11.30am. Please bring your children to 'praise and play' - coffee and squash available!

We can now offer activities, companionship and fun to every age group of children and young people.

These are all most welcome developments, and the teachers and helpers know that you will all understand that there may be slight difficulties in accommodating these fairly large groups until the new hall is available. Please may I thank, firstly, all the members and teachers for their enthusiastic work and, secondly, the parents who bring or send their children to church so faithfully - our Eucharist is very much enhanced by their presence and we enjoy their company!

Margaret Taylor

For more information, contact Sue Blay (977 0263), Lou Coaker (979 2040), Stuart Ward (979 4906) or Ruth Mills (977 5165).

A Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

20 - 30 October 1994

Mount Sinai

- Jerusalem

- The Galilee

Details and Booking Forms

from the Vicar

who will lead the Pilgrimage



A Time of Quiet

Amid the strains and stresses, the joys and sorrows of everyday life I feel a great need of peace and quiet. Some of you will know St. Michael's Convent on Ham Common, the Community of the Sisters of the Church. It was here that I decided to go, alone, for a quiet day before Christmas.

Somewhat apprehensive, I set out. I need not have worried for I was made most welcome by the sisters. To my delight I found that I had the library to myself for the day. A comfortable arm-chair, a tray of tea, coffee and biscuits, a beautiful view over the delightful garden wearing its autumn colours and peace, perfect peace, greeted me. My day was spent in prayer, in discovering new insights into a familiar Bible passage and dipping into George Appleton's 'The Practice of Prayer'. I tried to look at my life to see how I would offer it anew to God. In between times of decision, I walked in the garden and drank in its surprises and delights. I joined the sisters for Mid-day Office and ate lunch, tea and supper with them. Before the talking supper, the sisters had a communion service to which a young family came and others who were on retreat. There was ample time to relax and think about life.

The convent is a lovely place to spend a day. If the thought appeals to you, please ask me more about it.

Janet Jeffries

Help Wanted

The Community Care Group are desperately in need of drivers, gardeners and helpers for the Thursday Evening Coffee Bar for teenagers. More information is available from Deirdre Curran at the Greenwood Centre (979 9662) in School Road. Please offer your help if you can spare some time to do these valuable jobs.

A Christmas Day Lunch is again being arranged by the Teddington Christian Council of Churches for the elderly and lonely at Elleray Hall. Help is needed in providing Christmas cakes, small presents and transport, in the kitchen, in waiting at tables and generally in trying to make it a happy occasion for all. If you would like to help, or know of anyone who would like to be a guest, please ring Stella or Trevor King (977 3891) - by 11 December if possible.

The Julian Group

This group which has been meeting regularly for over ten years will meet formally for the last time on Tuesday 7 December at 2.30 pm at 30 St. James's Road. However I shall continue to offer the hospitality of no. 30 on the first Tuesday in every month at 2.30 pm to anyone who feels they would like to come, whether they have been group members or not. Just give me a ring (979 5868) on that Tuesday morning if you intend coming (or, indeed, give me a ring at any time if you feel you would like to come and see me). I am usually available and you will be very welcome.

Margery Orton

Muriel Rawlins

A moving tribute to Muriel - 'a truly Christian sister' - was included in the magazine of St. Peter and St. Paul's Parish Church, Rustington, where she had worshipped with Don (a Reader there) since moving from Hampton Hill, and where her funeral took place on 31 August.

On 17 October, I successfully completed the Solent Half-Marathon in memory of my mother, and to help raise funds for St. Barnabas's Hospice who cared so much for her during the last remaining days of her life. I would like to thank all those who supported me through sponsorship, and I am delighted to say that we have collected a sum of £500 which will be presented to the hospice within the next few weeks.

My father and family would like to thank all those at St. James's for their kindness and support after our sad loss. We would also like to express our thanks to those who were able to attend Muriel's funeral. Donations, amounting to £405, have also been given to the hospice.

Peter Rawlins

Around the Spire

We have to report the deaths of Jack McBride, one of our magazine distributors, who died suddenly while on a visit with his wife to a married son in California, and, just as we go to press, of Doris Warwick, who has suffered very poor health for many years. Our sympathy goes to Mrs. McBride and Russell Warwick, and their families, and we remember them in our prayers.

We also send our sympathy to the family of Peggy Bolt who recently died peacefully in her sleep. She and her husband, David Bolt, F.R.C.S., lived with their daughters for several years in Park Road, before moving to their present address, Feniton House, Feniton Old Village, Honiton, Devon.

Hannah Stanton is in the Princess Alice Hospice for a few days for a period of stabilisation before returning to her home. We wish her well.

Eila Severn is undergoing a period of enforced rest after damaging her spine in a fall while decorating their holiday home at Hayling Island. We hope soon to see her up and about with us again.

We shall be missing Jean Wilson for some months. We wish her a happy time as she goes off to New Zealand to visit family and friends.

From the Registers - October

Baptisms

17 Hallam Arthur Diment 34 Connaught Road, Teddington

Marriage

2 Michael Parker and Llyn Wootten

Marriage Blessing

2 Derek William West and Jenny Jones

Funerals

4	Jane Dorothy Allison	66 Hatherop Road, Hampton	
15	Henry James Holt Wiseman	64 Hampton Road, Teddington	Aged 88
18	Lilian Kathleen Peacock	98 St. James's Avenue	Aged 80
22	Anthony James Fisher	35 Holly Road	Aged 20
27	Benjamin Pascal Peaks	43 Hampton Road	Aged 19
29	Gladys Gertrude Trimbee	81 Laurel Road	Aged 97

Dates to Note

Dec.	1	14.30	Women's Forum, Church
	2	19.30	Re-licensing of the Diocesan Readers, St. Paul's Cathedral
	5	09.30	Christingle Service
	6	14.00	Editorial Board, 19 St. James's Road
	8	13.30	Hampton Hill Junior School Carols
	9	19.00	Hampton Hill Junior School Carols
	10	11.00	St. James's Nursery School Carols
	10	14.30	Lady Eleanor Hollis Junior School Carol Service
	12	11.00	Topping out ceremony for new Church Hall
	15	19.30	Lady Eleanor Hollis Senior School Carol Service
	15	20.00	Women's Forum, Church
	16	19.30	Rectory School Carol Service

**** See also Christmas Services on earlier page ****

19	18.30	Parish Carol Service
25		Christmas Day
27		St. John the Evangelist
28		The Holy Innocents
29		St. Stephen the first Martyr



Advance Notices

Jan	1		The Naming of Jesus
	5	14.30	Women's Forum, Church
	6		The Epiphany
	19	20.00	Women's Forum, Church

COPY DATE FOR JANUARY ISSUE : 12 DECEMBER