

OCTOBER 2009

The Spire



Small footprints

How one school is
leading the way
with its eco-policy

11am All-age Communion on 4 October

Harvest Festival

THE LEADER COLUMN

ARE WE CLOSER TO GOD IN TOWN OR COUNTRY? WHY HARVEST FESTIVAL MATTERS

God crops up everywhere



'You're nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth.'

Some words on a bird bath in a late great-aunt and uncle's garden outside Reading. Distance always lends enchantment, but I remember with much affection the Post Office stores run by my aunt and uncle in a quiet Berkshire village. (Perhaps it was because they allowed me to raid the ice cream freezer in the shop!) They had a lovely garden. It was peaceful. It was well cared for. All that came to an end when the M4 was built at the bottom of a nearby lane, cutting their village off from other villages, destroying their business, and upsetting their calm. They moved not many years later to the suburbs of Reading.

The words on their birdbath come back to me occasionally as I try to make sense of religious talk of God as the maker of the world. Quite often much is made of the wonders of creation. Yet so often the aspects of the natural world that are most palatable are emphasised - hills, trees, flowers. Unpalatable things like parasites, the tendency of animals to eat one another, and appalling natural disasters are ignored. The words on the birdbath certainly come back to me as I consider our Harvest Festival at St. James's on 4 October.

Harvest Festival, as it is now in England, is a relatively recent creation of the Victorian age. Yet the religious instinct of human beings has seen worshipping communities of different religions developing patterns of worship and prayer around their agricultural year. Ancient societies lived close to the land, as many in the world still do. The rhythms of nature were part of people's existence. If those rhythms were disrupted, people could starve. What then of being nearer to God's heart in the natural world than elsewhere?

There is a danger of imagining an ideal, rural past where everything was lovely before the coming of the great cities we now have. It is a dangerous fantasy for those of us who live in urban areas. It can mean that we do not appreciate the richness of urban living, seeing it only as dangerous and dirty. The diversity of the city is ignored. The rural paradise is exalted. Yet we have to live



Peter Vannozzi

where we are. If God is not near where we are, then God is nowhere.

I confess to a degree of ambivalence about celebrations of creation, such as Harvest Festival. I think they should happen. I share the natural instinct of so many people, past and present, to give thanks for the abundance of food and resources in the world. I share, too, the instinct to combine thanks with sorrow for the way that abundance can be squandered. Figures showing how much food is wasted in the UK are horrifying. I cannot explain to my own satisfaction how a Creator God can appear to want to bash his creation with such regularity. Yet I look with awe and wonder at this world, and I come full circle back to wanting to

give thanks. Yet I must do it where I am. Not just when I am pulling up a lettuce from my back garden, but also when I am stuck in a traffic jam. Yes, when I am picking my tomatoes, but also when I find myself in the middle of a shopping centre. If the concrete cannot speak to me of God as well as the green grass, then where is my God?

'You're nearer God's heart in a garden than anywhere else on earth.'

Sorry, my very dear late great-aunt and uncle, I think those words on your birdbath were just plain wrong. Harvest Festival can give us a sense of God as Creator. This may not be always easy. Yet despite its problems, if God is Creator, then God is Creator of all. Harvest Festival may seem to be a very rural celebration, but for those of us in urban areas, it can prompt us to look more deeply at where we live. Perhaps we can value it anew.

As it happens I recall my great-aunt at the end of her life being physically restricted. Yet she took immense pleasure at apparently tiny things in her life, such as the view from her front window, watching the children go to school, her neighbours coming in and out, and so on. She maintained some kind of quality of life which she might not have labelled 'spiritual.' Yet the ability she had to seek something good in what others would see as crushing limitations touched me. Perhaps she was close to God's heart in her new suburban setting. This is something I can believe in.

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

Psalm 65 is seen as a harvest hymn.

- 1 Our God, you deserve praise in Zion, where we keep our promises to you.
- 2 Everyone will come to you because you answer prayer.
- 8 People far away marvel at your fearsome deeds, and all who live under the sun celebrate and sing because of you.
- 9 You take care of the earth and send rain to help the soil grow all kinds of crops. Your rivers never run dry, and you prepare the earth to produce much grain.
- 10 You water all its fields and level the lumpy ground. You send showers of rain to soften the soil and help the plants sprout.
- 11 Wherever your footsteps touch the earth, a rich harvest is gathered.
- 12 Desert pastures blossom, and mountains celebrate.
- 13 Meadows are filled with sheep and goats; valleys overflow with grain and echo with joyful songs.



Christian Aid provides resources each year to make the celebration of Harvest Festival meaningful in the modern world. Here is some information from their website www.christianaid.org.uk, and a prayer:

The focus of Christian Aid's church Harvest materials is an Indian woman called Chandramma. Born a 'weeder' and belonging to the dalit class formerly known as 'the untouchables', she worked most of her life in others' fields in exchange for meagre handouts.

But all that changed when she joined a women's group supported by Christian Aid. Working together, the women used traditional farming methods to turn a wasteland in a drought-hit region of India into rich farmland.

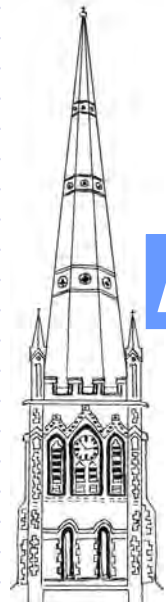
Chandramma now has more than enough food to feed her family. And not only that, she has worked with other women to distribute their excess harvest - helping feed 50,000 of the poorest in her community.

Generous God

Where there is wasteland, help us to hope for harvest; where there is poverty, help us to bring justice. In today's troubled times, may our generosity well up in the light of Your rich gifts to us. Give us the vision to see Your world the way it could be, the wisdom to shape our actions and the will to see change through. And may Your transforming joy rise up within us, overflowing into the lives of others across Your world. Amen.



The solar panels on its roof are only part of Hampton Hill Junior School's green credentials



AROUND THE SPIRE

NEWS FROM HAMPTON HILL AND BEYOND

St James's at St Luke's for the first time

This happy photo shows some of the lovely people at Milo who made Ann Peterken's visit to Tanzania so special. St James's has supported St Luke's Hospital in Milo for almost 30 years, but because of its remote location this was the first visit by a parishioner. They were delighted and send greetings and thanks to everyone. Benaiah Kilwale is second from the right and the two young ladies in front are Hongera Komba and Christina Kilwale (holding her sister's baby), two of the students we are sponsoring. Ann will be sharing news and photos, so look out for details in church or on the website.



Tools charity celebrates 25th anniversary

Tools with a Mission (TWAM) marked its 25th anniversary with a celebration in Ipswich, pictured right, attended by dignitaries and representatives from parts of Africa who work with the children and adults using the tools and materials we collect. The day ended with a service of thanksgiving. Displays of tools, computers, sewing machines, haberdashery, typewriters, school packs and bicycles renovated and ready for dispatch were on display and many people were surprised at the variety of tool kits produced and at the many aspects of poverty relief work TWAM is engaged in. It is more than a year since Janet Nunn joined forces with Peter Perrin from Whittton Baptist Church to collect items and she still gets telephone calls most weeks from people with things to donate. Peter's target was 100 sewing machines and he is now just two short, not forgetting the tools, bicycles and materials. If you can donate anything please telephone Janet Nunn on 020 8979 6325.



Mobile phones: If you have replaced your mobile phone recently, many charities would welcome your old one. There are envelopes in a wallet on the Eco notice board in the Church Hall. Do help yourself.



REGISTERS JULY & AUGUST

JULY

Baptisms

- 5 Harry Jasper Wilson Coffin, Hampton.
- 5 Isabella Alice Ho, Teddington.
- 12 Jack George Rice, Hampton (and Qatar).

Weddings

- 3 Fiona White and Jason Leslie Hole
- 25 Emma Louise Le Good and Lee Stephen Jerwood
- 31 Katherine Jane Margaret Rench and Joseph Robert Clark

Funerals

- 13 Joyce Gwendolin Lampard, 80, New Malden
- 21 Barbara Light, 77, Hampton

AUGUST

Baptisms

- 2 Willow Rose McGuinness, Hampton Hill
- 2 Sienna Angelina Florence Wallington, Teddington
- 16 William Ronnie Wilkins, Hampton Hill
- 23 Maxwell Edwin Green, Hampton
- 23 Jack Wilson Davies, Hampton Hill

Wedding

- 14 Emma Gray and Max Harley

Funerals

- 3 Christine Webb, 58, Hampton
- 14 Douglas John Passmore, 76, Hampton Hill

There's nothing ordinary about us!

A centre providing help for families and young people has recently opened at Hampton Hill Junior School. Headteacher **Bill Jerman** explains why it fits with the school's wider ambitions to become an eco-champion.

Recently we were thrilled to officially open The Norman Jackson Family Centre. This is housed in our former caretaker's house and is a wonderful resource, providing a local base for many of the services, such as health, that support young children and families in Hampton Hill.

The centre will include a Citizens' Advice Bureau, health services and space for groups to meet. By providing this locally, the aim is to make them much more accessible.

We were delighted to have the centre named after Norman Jackson VC in memory of his bravery during the Second World War. It was lovely that so many of his children (ex-pupils of Hampton Hill) were able to attend the opening. His daughter Sally said the whole family were thrilled that the centre had been named after him.

Our school council was very interested in his story and his memorial will benefit the whole community.

Mr Jackson, who lived in Burtons Road, was awarded the Victoria Cross – the highest military decoration – in October 1945 for his bravery during a raid over Germany in 1944. His Lancaster bomber caught fire after being attacked by a German plane at 20,000 feet. Sgt Jackson tried to put out the blaze by clipping on a parachute and climbing onto the wing with a fire extinguisher. His plane crashed, but he survived and spent a year in

a German hospital. He was later sent to a prison camp, from where he escaped. He went on to become a travelling salesman and built a home for his family in Hampton Hill. He died in 1994.

The memorial follows a campaign led by his family, Twickenham MP Vince Cable, the Victoria Cross Society and the local branch of the Royal Air Force Association.

London's most sustainable school

Meanwhile, our school continues to go from strength to strength and we were so excited that in the summer we were chosen as London's Leading Sustainable School in the National Teaching Awards.

This is in recognition of the wide range of sustainability initiatives that we have undertaken at the school, including projects such as waste-free Fridays, paperless pen pals and eco-ambassadors who switch off lights and close windows to conserve energy.

It is a really exciting award and we now go forward to the national, televised finals.

We have also taken the initiative with renewable energy and, since January 2008, we have installed solar thermal panels which heat all our hot water and solar photovoltaic panels which contribute up to 25% of our electricity usage. We have replaced oil-burning boilers with 'intelligent' gas boilers.

There is a great deal more to being a sustainable school than energy sources.



Vince Cable MP officially opens the Norman Jackson Family Centre, named after the Second World War RAF flight engineer, below, who risked his life to try to save his aircraft. He was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.



Under the government's framework by 2020:

- Schools should provide healthy, local and sustainable food and drink, with a strong commitment to the environment and animal welfare;
- Vehicles should only be used when absolutely necessary. Cycling, walking or car-sharing should be encouraged;
- School buildings, old and new, should have sustainable technologies. Pupils should learn about the natural world and sustainable living through growing food and biodiversity conservation;
- Schools should be models of energy efficiency, renewable energy use and water conservation, showcasing efforts such as wind and solar energy;
- Schools should source goods and services that have high environmental and ethical standards, locally where possible, and repair, re-use and recycle;
- Schools should be models of social inclusion, instilling a long-lasting respect for human rights, freedoms and cultures;
- School pupils should care about their local area, with activities that improve everyone's quality of life; and
- School pupils should care about the world, with activities that improve the lives of people in other countries.

Please feel free to contact the school if you want to know more.

New partner school



Pupils and staff with the eco award

We continue to develop our links with schools around the world. Our long-term link with our partner school in Nagano in Japan is thriving and nearly 100 of our pupils use their lunchtimes to contact their pupils in Japan using 'Japan - UK Live'.

We have a new partner school, Korwenje Primary School in Kisumu, Kenya. It is a large primary school and we have swapped letters and photos so far and shared information about each other's schools. We are also about to launch a new link with a school in Holland and are excited about this.

Can you help us?

Finally, do you have a couple of hours a week to come into school to work with the children? It would involve hearing them read, helping with their maths tables, or in other ways. Please telephone 020 8979 3019.



David Bell

St James's welcomes a candidate for ordination

Who are you?
I'm David Bell, married to Janet, and we have lived in Hampton Wick for 30 years. Our children, Catherine, Fiona and Philip are all in their twenties. Catherine lives in Yorkshire, where I was born, and the other two are at home. In recent years we have spent time in Penwith, Cornwall, as we have a small house there. My involvement in church began when I was a teenager by teaching at Sunday School and later in life I have led all-age worship, workshops on intercessions and a prayer group.

What do you do?
My career has mainly been in publishing business weeklies, and their websites, with responsibility for advertising sales. I have also worked for a small business developing employee benefit services for people in NHS Trusts. I currently



work in Camden on magazines that serve professionals in the public sector. Setting clear goals, maintaining regular communication and working to deadlines are all part of my working day.

What will you be doing?
I am a new Ordinand in the Church of England. The Bishop sent me to a national selection panel in May this year and they have advised him that I am suitable to go forward for ministerial training. I hope to be a self-supporting minister (like Debbie Oades). I begin this autumn with evening classes at Southwark Cathedral and several residential weekend schools throughout the year. It is an intense three-year programme and will be a challenge, but I am looking forward to the adventure. My bookcase is starting to fill up! When St Paul in his letter to the Corinthians

writes 'See, everything has become new!' it certainly applies to my life in Christ.

Why St James's?
I have been worshipping locally at the same church for decades and feel that it would be good to broaden my experience in preparation for being a priest and being involved with new and varied church communities. We received a friendly welcome here and Peter, who has considerable experience with newly trained priests, has kindly agreed to be my mentor on this part of my journey. This involves supporting me when required, but also making assessments of my progress for the college. Whilst being aware that my learning will take up most of the time when I am not working, I look forward to being part of your fellowship and am enthusiastic about participating where I can.

Server, chorister, poet — we say goodbye to Eve

Eve Stock passed away on 30 July and her funeral was held in church on 21 September. We all miss the sight of Eve sitting with her walker in the South Aisle, but not many people will remember that, some years ago, before her illness worsened, she sang in the choir, served at the altar, and cycled in Hampton Hill to her various house-cleaning jobs. Eve had a great appreciation of beauty, seeing it in the paintings of the pre-Raphaelites (she especially loved the stained-glass windows of Burne-Jones), in poetry and in flowers. If you heard Eve reading her special *Chocolate Cake* poem at a gathering or party, you would never forget! Eve gave delightful little Christmas gifts, always chosen with care and much appreciated by the recipients. Eve celebrated both her 60th and 70th birthdays with a party for family and friends in the Church Hall. They were happy occasions. We all have memories of her and it is with sadness that we say goodbye.

It was good to see **Jean Western** back in church after her spell in Teddington Hospital and determined to try to manage at home.

A big thank you to the 20 **Children's Society** box holders who between them collected £321.30 which has now been sent to the Society. If you would like to contribute to this very worthwhile charity, please contact Pip or Anne Rowett in church or on 020 8892 4736 to get a box. Giving just 5p a day (less than the cost of one pint of milk per week) provides an annual contribution of £18 and relieves your pocket or handbag of small change!



Churches urged to take the lead on saving energy

The Church of England's environmental campaign is now three years old. To mark the recent event, the **Shrinking the Footprint** campaign has unveiled energy saving toolkits for every parish, and here at St James's we are playing our part.

The Bishop of London, the Rt Revd Richard Chartres, is asking all churches to go one step further in cutting their carbon footprint, reminding us that caring for the planet is a Christian imperative for the sake of future generations. He also urged churches to campaign for change locally. New resources, with energy saving tips and guidance, are available at www.shrinkingthefootprint.org. These include action plans and checklists, along with advice on considering the appropriate use of renewable energy in church buildings.

Leave your cars at home Sunday on 5 July, which encouraged us to think about our carbon footprint, was very successful, with most of the congregation either walking or cycling to church, and receiving a sticker from the uniformed youth groups as a reward! There were noticeably fewer cars in the car park and on the road that day. The Eco Group plans to organise another similar day soon.





Quiz - St. James's Baptistry

- Fill the gaps below using the following words: (wooden, furniture, water, worship, faith, font, entrance, octagonal, back, nave, baptism, priest, stone, holy, bell tower)

- Design your own font panel

The baptistry surrounds the baptismal and is at the of the church, near the original in the south porch. As we come into the church to, we pass the font and this reminds us of our because baptism is the entry point into the Christian The baptistry is at the bottom of the with the entrance to the bell tower in the far corner.

A **baptismal font** is a piece of church used for baptism. The font is a large (eight-sided) bowl-shaped which holds the used in baptism. This water has been sanctified (made) by the There is a smallfont which is used when a baptism takes place in the of the church.



The font sides are beautifully carved, each with a different symbol design.

- Draw arrows from the pictures to the correct titles



An Eagle
A symbol for St. John

IHC - first three letters of the Greek word for Jesus

A Winged Man
A symbol for St. Matthew

XP - first two letters of the Greek word for Christ



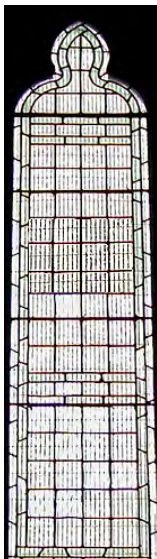
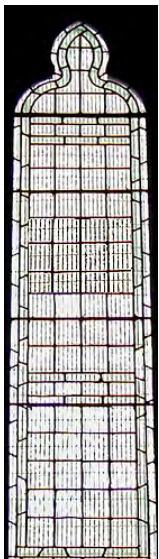
A Winged Lion
A symbol for St. Mark

A and O Alpha and Omega - the beginning and end

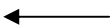
Star of David Jesus is referred to as 'Son of David'

A Winged Calf or Ox
A symbol for St. Luke

Stained Glass Windows in the Baptistry



South Side:



A and O
(Alpha and Omega)

- What do the words Alpha and Omega mean?

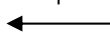
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- Draw the correct signs for Alpha and Omega in the windows



North Side:

Left panel:



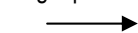
- I am the Good S.....

- What is the clue in the picture?

.....
.....
.....

North Side:

Right panel:



- I am the L..... of the World

- What is the clue in the picture?

.....
.....
.....





Revelations

Crime, punishment and forgiveness

By the time this magazine is distributed the repatriation of the Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset al-Megrahi and its noisy repercussions will probably be out of the news. But perhaps those who studied the affair and came to considered personal conclusions will have discovered something about different governments, various politicians, some other people, their own friends and also themselves. One newspaper claimed that nobody came well out of the affair. This is surely not true. The quiet dignity and charity of several of those who had lost relatives and friends made the posturing of some politicians seem shallow and unpleasant, and in some cases self-serving and cowardly. The Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's response to an act of clemency was contemptible. But those who considered and discussed the matter honestly, and with an attempt to adhere to principle rather than passion, even if they had no personal cause for grief and whether they thought the Scottish Justice Secretary, Kenny MacAskill's decision was right or wrong, may have helped to heal the wounds caused by the awful crime over Lockerbie.

Hearts and Minds

A UK reporter, an ethnic Afghan, embedded with the UK forces in Helmand, described the honest efforts that were being made by the NATO forces to 'win hearts and minds' by building roads, bridges and community facilities for the villages in the area, and to promote democratic order. He then described a journey he made in a troop carrier, which travelled fast along a main road, forcing pedestrians, donkey carts and other vehicles off the road as it made its journey. Possibly painting a biased picture to make his point, he described the anger and contempt he saw in the faces of the people they passed, and felt that this one journey had negated much of the good work that had been done in reconstruction. Implicitly the villagers were being treated as inferiors. He saw no hope for success in Afghanistan while the population regarded the NATO forces not as friends, but as an occupying power.

Poetry Please

Poetry Please was a Radio 4 programme, in recent years broadcast late on Sunday evenings, though not on the air at present. Perhaps it was enjoyed mainly by owls and insomniacs, though its friends must hope that it will be reinstated in the not too distant future, perhaps at the same programme time. It was started in 1979 by the BBC staff reporter Brian Patten, as a half-hour in which poems requested by listeners were read by professional performers, and this general format was continued. Since about 1985 it has been presented by the amiable Roger McGough, himself a poet, though because of the humour and simplicity of much of his verse it may be underrated. McGough has had a very interesting career. He was born and brought up in Liverpool, when the city was developing its reputation for the Mersey Sound, most famously with the Beatles. John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Paul's brother Mike McCartney were all friends of McGough. Since then he has been a lecturer, a broadcaster, a writer and of course a poet. He is now in his seventies, and an ideal presenter for the enjoyable late-night programme.



St James's Ark

Carers and Toddlers' Group, St James's Church, 10.30-12.30pm every Monday during term time. £2 per session per family.

Come and share in conversation, refreshments, play time, story time, crafts and worship. Contact the parish office 020 8941 6003 or Revd Debbie Oades 01784 260498 or Debbie Nunn 020 8979 3078.

Harvest Festival and Bring a Friend to Church Day

Sunday 4 October, 11am, St James's Church

The All-Age Communion, with a full parade by our uniformed organisations, will be held at 11am followed by a bring-and-share lunch, served in the hall. Wine and beer will be available by donation.

This year we are combining this with **Back to Church Day**, which last year resulted in 36,000 people swelling congregations across the UK. We would like as many of you as possible to invite a friend to St James's. They might be a former churchgoer who has got out of the habit, or someone unsure about church worship.

According to research, about 40% of people who leave the church come back at some stage, usually about eight to ten years later. Some return after a special 'life-event' such as marriage or the birth of a child. Some return when their partner dies. Others come back because they missed the worship. Some even return because they are drawn by an attractive notice board, or receive a letter from the vicar. Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest and writer, said: 'I've yet to meet anyone who has come closer to Jesus by forsaking the Church. To listen to the Church is to listen to the Lord of the Church.'

For Harvest Festival, we are collecting essential items for two organisations that support homeless and vulnerable adults: the **Upper Room** in Hammersmith and **SPEAR** in Richmond. Please bring your gift to the Harvest Festival service, or into church before mid-October, making sure they are well within the 'best by' date.

Suggested items include - Tinned foods: meat products (stews, pies, sausages), fish products, soups, vegetables, beans. **Dry goods:** biscuits, chocolate, coffee, tea, cereals, pasta. **Toiletries:** toothbrushes and paste, disposable razors, stick deodorants, body lotions, soap and shampoo. Men's socks.



Vicar's View



...I take it our local supermarket has a rather good offer on tinned peas at the moment!

St James's Theatre Club

Wednesday 7 October, 7.45pm, *Entertaining Angels*, Richmond Theatre

Penelope Keith stars as a vicar's widow in this razor-sharp comedy. Tickets are £18.50 (normally £28.50).

The club has also secured tickets for the following productions from Richmond Theatre's new season: Thursday 22 October, 7.45pm, *Caucasian Chalk Circle*, by Bertolt Brecht. A servant girl sacrifices everything to protect an abandoned girl. Tickets are £13 (normally £24). Monday 26 October, 7.45pm, *Rain Man*. Neil Morrissey stars in the stage version of the Oscar-winning film. Tickets are £17 (normal price £27).

Tuesday 3rd November, 7.45pm, *Dial M for Murder*, from the producers of *The 39 steps*. Tickets are £14 (normal price £24).

Monday 16th November, 7.45pm, *Mrs Warren's Profession* starring Felicity Kendal. One of George Bernard Shaw's best plays. Catch it pre-West End. Tickets are £18 (normal price £28.50).

Tuesday 12 January 2010, 7.45pm, *The Woman in Black*. Susan Hill's spine-chilling classic. Tickets are £14 (normal price £24).

To join us, please add your name on the lists on the church notice board or order telephone Ria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336. Transport can be arranged.

Initiatives of Change

Tuesday 13 October, 7.15pm, *Conflict Resolution*, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD.

Andres Ives, chair of Peace Direct, a charity that finds, funds and promotes local peace building, will introduce members of the Truce 2020 project in Newham, east London, who are working to prevent disputes among young people from getting out of hand.

Tuesday 1 December, 7.15pm, *Saving the Earth* The Rt Revd James Jones, Bishop of Liverpool, chairs the governing body of the St Francis of Assisi City Academy. He is also author of *Jesus and the Earth*, and founder of Faiths4Change, engaging faith groups in the transformation of the environment.

There are light refreshments from 6.30pm. The talks are free, with a collection towards expenses. To book places, please telephone 020 7798 6000 or email to reception@london.iofc.org

Charity Christmas Cards Sale

Sunday 25 October and Sunday 1 November, 10.30am, St James's Church Hall

Immediately after the 9.30am service you will have the chance to buy Christmas cards and support a host of charities, including RNLI, FSID (cot death research), Princess Alice Hospice, Shooting Star Hospice, Christian Aid. Fairtrade goods will also be available.

All Souls' Service

Sunday 1 November, 6pm, St James's Church

A service to remember friends and loved ones who have passed away. Everyone is welcome.

The Age of Stupid

Friday 13 November, 7.30pm, St James's Church Hall

This film is an excellent way to start thinking about climate change and the way we live. Full details in the November Spire, but please keep the evening free and tell Catherine Gash (020 8783 0563) that you will be joining us.

Confirmation Service

Sunday 22 November, 6pm, St James's Church

A confirmation service for candidates from several local churches to be held at St James's with Bishop Paul.

In tune with master builder



In the June issue, Moya Meredith Smith gave us a thoughtful look at the 'Creationism versus Darwinism' debate from her viewpoint as an evolutionary biologist. By coincidence, I had just taken part in Hampton Choral Society's performance of Haydn's *Creation*, a joyfully evocative setting of Genesis, Chapter 1. My experiences as a singer, and as a builder, could hardly be more different from Moya's: yet we share the same faith and beliefs.

Our family building business was staffed with men whose creative abilities were expressed in manual crafts; carpenters and joiners; bricklayers, plasterers and painters. All were craftsmen, from whom I learned much before moving into management to work with architects in the realisation of their design concepts for schools, churches, and housing. Our general contracting activities included conservation projects in historic buildings: the palaces at Greenwich, Kew, Hampton Court and Windsor, even Westminster; the products of craftsmanship in bygone ages.

Here were different and richly rewarding aspects of 'creation', examples of which we can see in our own church. The handiwork of masons, stone carvers and wood carvers; of the specialised skills displayed in our stained glass windows, our font, the clock and bells and organ; and our pulpit, our splendid embroidered altar frontals, and not least, Peter's and Debbie's vestments.

I was asked recently why did I take up singing, and am still singing 70-odd years later? Well, I started as a boy treble in 1935, at the age of 11, in the choir of the mission church of St Martin, Twickenham. This was described as a 'chapel of ease' for the Cole Park estate, under the patronage of the Parish Church of St Mary, Twickenham.

In 1940, a year after the outbreak of war, All Hallows Church was built, incorporating much of the fine oak carvings and panelling salvaged from the demolition of All Hallows, Lombard Street, as well as its monolithic Portland stone tower. If you want to know more about this fascinating event go to www.allhallowstwick.org.uk/history, which notes: 'Dedicating All Hallows in November 1940, with the sound of gunfire in the distance, the Bishop of London reflected that it was marvellous that the bells which had rung out over the City of London would now ring out here.'

Later, my voice having broken, membership of the Air Training Corps took over from the choir. During the bleak war years of rationing, the Blitz, and the blackout, we, (Mum, Dad, two brothers and two sisters), would cheer our spirits with a Sunday evening sing-song: mainly ballads, such as *Green grow the rushes-o*; *Clementine*; *Cockles and Mussels* and *It ain't gonna rain no more*. Our enjoyment of this simple pleasure greatly helped to offset the radio's (Home service) often grim war news.

A lighter note came when my ATC membership led to

renewing the halliards of the flagpole, my father having 'volunteered' me, and a fellow cadet who could splice ropes, to do the job. Getting out onto the flat roof of the tower, we found that the flagpole was, in fact, 40ft high. Threading the new ropes over the top pulleys involved taking several 8ft ladder sections up the internal stairs and ladders of the tower. Lashing them to the flagpole, we found that what had seemed a gentle zephyr at ground level became, at height, a stiff breeze – the words 'wind-up' came to mind!

Later, our firm provided 'attendance' on the bells being hung: an interesting and very specialised job. Our part was to provide a complete new timber floor to the bell chamber, and of great interest was the initial swinging of the bells, while the amount of 'sway' of the structure was measured.

Fast forward some years. By 1944 I had enlisted with the RAF for two years as a potential Bomb-Aimer. In 1945 Ruth and I married in All Hallows Church, and in 1948 we moved to a small semi on the Fulwell Park estate, just big enough for us and one baby girl, soon to be joined by a sister. The birth of our son John precipitated the move to St James's Road in 1956, and our taking up active membership of St James' in 1961. A new organist, Ron Dafforne, persuaded me in 1968 to 'augment' the choir for Stainer's *Crucifixion*: a 'one-off' soon to be followed by other works, and regular membership ever since. To others I would say, if you enjoy singing and haven't had the rewarding experience of choir membership, why not give it a try in a church choir?

In 1976 I joined Teddington Choral Society, and with them and other choirs, some 700 voices in all, for three successive years enjoyed the unforgettable experience of singing *Messiah* in the Royal Albert Hall in aid of the Malcolm Sargent Cancer Fund for children. In 1992 a group of us left Teddington to join Hampton Choral Society, with whom I have remained. I also joined Concordia, to realise that their high standards were beyond my abilities – but we retain an amicable relationship.

Further afield, choir trips with Chris Hodges took me to Caen to sing in the enormous church of St Pierre and in the Abbaye des Hommes; and closer to home, to Llandaff cathedral. With Hampton Choral Society I went to the 12th Century cathedral of Notre Dame in Laon, Flanders, with its seven towers; and to the 13th Century cathedral of St Etienne in Bourges; to the baroque St Nicholas Church, Prague; and Zelik Monastery, 60 miles to the south-east.

All of these were built and created by simple men as statements of their simple faith. It was humbling, but deeply rewarding, to have sung praises in such places. As we reflect, perhaps we can join with 'Papa' Haydn and his Christmas masterpiece: *The heavens are telling the glory of God: the wonder of his work...*



The Reredos

In common with many churches, St. James's has a reredos, which is a screen or decoration behind the high altar. It is also known as an 'altar-piece.' A reredos can be simple or elaborate. It may depict people (Christ, saints); religious symbols (a cross); a biblical story.

In St. James's Church the reredos has religious symbols. The central panel has a cross in marble. When St. James's was first built, it is unlikely that it had a cross on the high altar. In those days this would have been seen as unacceptable in a 'Protestant' church.

A cross in marble on the wall, though, may have been better. If the cross is removed from the high altar (as it is in Lent) the reredos cross provides a very obvious focus for the church, drawing one's eyes towards it.

The cross is flanked in the reredos by bread and wheat, and wine and grapes. The altar is the focus of the celebration of the eucharist or holy communion. Bread and wine are taken and shared. Hence the depiction of them in the reredos, immediately behind the high altar, the original altar of the church.

The depiction not just of the final products of bread and wine, but also of the wheat and grape, remind us at Harvest Festival that at the eucharist we use the fruits of the harvest in the Church's principal act of worship.

Prayers which may use when the bread and wine are placed on the altar praise God for his gifts in creation: 'Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation, through your goodness we have this bread/wine to offer...'

The prayer relating to the bread continues: '...which earth has given, and human hands have made.'

The prayer relating to the wine says: '...fruit of the vine, and work of human hands.'

