

The Spire

The magazine of St James's Church, Hampton Hill

Free, but a donation helps us!

November 2008

INSIDE



**Russian
odyssey**

Remembrance Sunday

**Don't miss: Parish Communion,
Sunday 9 November at 9.45am, followed
by a short service at the war memorial**

Info Board

ONLINE Check out the website for all the latest news

Welcome

November 2008



Our new look **Spire** has been very well received and we hope that it will inspire you to send in articles. Harvest Festival was an extra special occasion this year as we welcomed our new curate, Debbie Oades, to St James's.

November is a time for reflection with All Souls Day on Sunday 2 November when we remember members of our family and friends who are no longer with us. A service will be held at 6pm to which everyone is welcome.

November is also the time of national reflection for those who gave their lives in two World Wars and more recent conflicts. Our Parish Eucharist on Sunday 9 November will begin at 9.45am so



that we can have a short service around our War Memorial at 11am to coincide with the service at the Cenotaph and all the other services held around the world.

Our next edition will be a bumper one for December and January and we have a few changes up our sleeve for the Christmas edition.

Best wishes

Janet

Janet Nunn, Editor.

The Spire

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Magazine distribution

The Spire is available free from church. It is also posted or delivered to more than 600 homes. For more about this, contact Susan Horner (see above).

Contributions welcome

The Spire is your magazine and we welcome articles. We regret we cannot print fiction, poetry or anything subject to copyright. We can't promise to publish, so to avoid disappointment please contact the editor first.

Getting the magazine

Lost a copy of **The Spire**? The magazine has been online since 2006. It can be enlarged and is available on tape. For more information contact the editor.

Magazine appeal

££ If you have enjoyed reading **The Spire** please make a donation to help us cover the printing and distribution costs. Cheques should be made payable to 'St James's PCC' and sent to the Parish Office. Thank you.

Next issue/Copy deadline

The next issue of **The Spire** is a double issue, covering Christmas and New Year, and will be published on 30 November. All copy must be with us by **Monday 10 November**.

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Updates

Please tell us about any changes

Printing

Caring for the environment



Paper

Please recycle this magazine when you have finished with it.



Mixed Sources

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J A Hollingsworth 020 8686 4481

Services for November



Sundays

8am Holy Communion
9.30am Parish Communion (9.45, 9 Nov)

2 November

4th Sunday before Advent
All Saints' and All Souls'
Morning services Revelation 9.9-17;
1 John 3.1-3; Matthew 5.1-12
6pm Wisdom 3.1-9; John 5.19-24

9 November

3rd Sunday before Advent
Remembrance Sunday
Amos 5.18-24
1 Thessalonians 4.13-18
Matthew 25.1-13

16 November

2nd Sunday before Advent
Zephaniah 1.7,12-18
1 Thessalonians 5.1-11
Matthew 25.14-30

23 November

Christ the King
Ezekiel 34.11-16, 20-24
Ephesians 1.15-23
Matthew 25.31-46

30 November

1st Sunday of Advent
Isaiah 64.1-9
1 Corinthians 1.3-9
Mark 13.24-37

1st Sunday in month

2 November
9.30am All-age Communion

Mondays-Fridays (not Tuesdays)

9.15am Morning Prayer

Tuesdays

9.30am Holy Communion

1st Wednesday in month

5 November
7am Commuter Communion

1st Thursday in month

6 November
2pm Holy Communion

Remember, yes, give thanks, but also pray for a better future

PETER VANNOZZI

On Sunday 9 November, people will gather at war memorials to keep two minutes silence. This may be at 11am, but it may be at other times, too. The numbers may be great or they may be small. Nonetheless the intention is the same - to remember those who have died in war.

For many years there seemed to be embarrassment about Remembrance Sunday. Some saw it as a glorification of war, others as a narrow, nationalistic celebration. Yet in recent years this seems to have changed. The work of the Royal British Legion in promoting Remembrance cannot be underestimated. Recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have perhaps also made more real to a new generation what is given and taken in war.

This can be remembered even if a person is not in support of a given military action. Personally Remembrance Sunday has always meant a great deal to me, and I can observe it without any degree of unease.

I want to share with you two experiences of Remembrance observances that stay with me. The first was in Wakefield where I worked previously. For two years' running it was my privilege to preach at the Remembrance service at Wragby parish church, located within the grounds of Nostell Priory, a fine house now owned by the National Trust.

The service was a combination I had not come across before - part community singing, part service, accompanied by a brass band, and moving towards a two minute silence. There was a simple dignity about the occasion, and a feeling about it that seemed to be a mixture of sadness and thanksgiving.

The second experience of a Remembrance observance was the first time I became conscious of the Festival of Remembrance from the Royal Albert Hall on the eve of Remembrance Sunday. I have a recollection of being a small boy and watching on television the paper poppies being released and falling down on those gathered on the floor of the Hall. Again, I can recall that sense of sadness, but also something more. Was it thanksgiving? I think so.

I had heard too much from my grandmother about the First World War, and the presence of my grandfather and great-uncle in the trenches, not to be affected in some way by the falling of so many poppies. Of course, the things I have recalled could just be sentimental meanders down 'Memory

Lane' and nothing more. It may make me feel better to indulge in nostalgia, but for anyone reading this, why should they care?

I want us to hold on to two things about Remembrance Sunday, and they are sorrow and thanksgiving. There is an order of service for Remembrance Sunday which has been drawn up by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, an umbrella body with members from most the Christian churches. The introduction is this:

We meet in the presence of God.

We commit ourselves to work in penitence and faith

for reconciliation between the nations, that all people may, together, live in freedom, justice and peace.

We pray for all

who in bereavement, disability and pain

continue to suffer the consequences of fighting and terror.

We remember with thanksgiving and sorrow

those whose lives,

in world wars and conflicts past and present,

have been given and taken away.

Explicit mention is made of thanksgiving and sorrow, but there is also clear reference to the future. If there is one thing that makes an observance of Remembrance Sunday Christian it is that even as we look back, we also look forward and hope that the future will be different.

The past is hugely important to Christianity. We remember events that happened in the past. Yet if they do not speak to the present and do not influence the future, what is the point of recalling them? Stories told and re-told about Jesus are not just there to make us feel comfy and nice, but so that people and events can be different in the future.

The introduction makes clear that 'We meet in the presence of God.' This has consequences. We are committed to work for something better for people. In penitence for past wrongs, but with faith in something better for the future, we are to look for a time of freedom, justice and peace. Jesus spoke a lot of the kingdom of God. God's reign was to be different from the present world. This was to affect the world as it is now, and not just be for the world to come. Remembrance Sunday can be an expression for Christians of hope for something better which can be shared with all of good will.

IN THOUGHT AND PRAYER

November begins with two feast days: All Saints' on the 1st and All Souls' on the 2nd. Here are some words about saints, and then about death, as on both days we commemorate and celebrate those who have died.

Thomas Merton

For me to be a saint means to be myself. Therefore the problem of sanctity and salvation is in fact the problem of finding out who I am and of discovering my true self. Trees and animals have no problem. God makes them what they are without consulting them, and they are perfectly satisfied. With us it is different. God leaves us free to be whatever we like. We can be ourselves or not, as we please. We are at liberty to be real, or to be unreal. We may be true or false, the choice is ours. We may wear one mask and now another, and never, if we so desire, appear with our own true face. But we cannot make these choices with impunity... If we have chosen the way of falsity we must not be surprised that truth eludes us when we finally come to need it!

John Donne, Holy Sonnet X

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee

Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;

For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow

Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.

From rest and sleep, which yet thy pictures be,

Much pleasure, then from thee much more, must low

And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones and soul's delivery.

Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings and desperate men

And dost with poison, war and sickness dwell,

And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well

And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?

One short sleep past, we wake eternally,

And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die.



Features

News Bulletin

Help create a Flanders poppy field

POPPIES This November marks the 90th anniversary of the end of The First World War, and the Royal British Legion is honouring the memory of its heroes by planting a field of poppies in the ground where they fell.

You can be part of this event by sending a personal message to be written on to a poppy. The poppies will be planted beside the Menin Gate



Memorial at Ypres for Armistice Day on 11 November.

The Great War lasted four years with the total human cost to Britain and the Empire of 3,049,972 casualties, including

658,705 dead.

Today there are just three stalwarts of the battlefields living in the UK, including Henry Allingham. He said: 'These hellish memories of war are ones I'd rather forget. But never my comrades.'

To take part in the tribute telephone 0845 8451945, or go to the website www.poppy.org and click on Flanders Field.

£41,000

That's the figure raised from Planned Giving up to July this year. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed. The church has to pay for everything it does - this year about £147,000. This includes a contribution to central church funds which pays for clergy salaries and pensions, heating, insurance, building maintenance and other expenses. Givers commit to a regular sum, at whatever frequency is best for them. If you are a taxpayer the church (along with other charities) is able to claim a further 28% from the government. If you have yet to join our Planned Giving scheme, through standing order, or blue or weekly envelopes, please do so now. For more information phone Rodney Taylor on 020 8979 0046.

All the fun of the fair in Hampton Hill

FETE Hampton Hill is to hold its first village fete and fair in Bushy Park in July next year.

Attractions will include live bands, a karate exhibition, dance troupes, children's rides and more than 100 stalls, the Hampton Hill Association said.

Organiser Helen Hurley said: 'We felt that it was time to stage a major event to celebrate our unique village. At the same time we wanted to build awareness of the environmental issues affecting us all. We hope that the whole community will want to be involved.'

www.hhfete.co.uk

Prayer for the credit crunch

A new prayer published on the Church of England website aims to help people caught up in the current financial crisis. It begins: 'Lord God, we live in disturbing days: across the world, prices rise, debts increase, banks collapse, jobs are taken away, and fragile security is under threat.'

www.cofe.anglican.org/prayers

Registers for September

Baptisms

7 Elsa Victoria van Thiel.

21 Patrick Brodie Fox Cowan; Franky David Forster

28 Joseph Alexander Boluda; Scarlett Olivia Sant.

Weddings

20 Peter Duncan Leonard and Natasha Louise Bernadette Smith.

27 Edward George Gibbs and Rona White.

27

From Russia with love...

Russia is flexing its muscles again, growing in strength thanks to its gas and oil exports. But behind the headlines, and more surprising, is the growth in religion. A third of the population are now Christians, as Martin and Prill Hinckley discovered on a recent visit.

This August we went on a river cruise from St. Petersburg to Moscow. We had never been to Russia before and had very little idea what to expect. We found huge contrasts - of poverty but also great wealth, some churches and monasteries magnificently restored, others in sad decay, and strikingly different opinions as to the benefits or otherwise of the recent political and economic

upheavals. Things are generally now more relaxed for tourists than they apparently were in the soviet era though, as elsewhere, crime is a problem (Martin was mugged though not hurt).

Our first stop, St. Petersburg, was founded by Tsar Peter the Great in 1703 as Russia's 'Window on the West'. It is often referred to as the 'Venice of the north', with magnificent neo-Classical buildings and spacious avenues and canals. The October Revolution started there in 1917 and during the Second World War the city withstood a 900-day siege

We visited the Peter and Paul Cathedral, the resting place of the Tsars. Like many churches there it has a spire, a deliberate western feature marking a departure from the onion domes usually found in Russia. Many churches have five of these cupolas. The central one represents Christ and the surrounding ones the four evangelists.

The celebrated Hermitage Museum was also on our itinerary. One of the world's great art galleries, set in the former Winter Palace, it was Catherine the Great's private museum before becoming the first public art museum in Russia in the mid-nineteenth century. We broke away from the guide and found a quiet corner among the impres-



Holy Trinity Church, Moscow

sionists, away from the crowds.

We visited the Catherine Palace in the village of Pushkin. Restored after the Second World War, one of the palace's most impressive rooms is the Picture Gallery, which runs the full length of the building. We also saw the magnificently restored Amber Room with its solid panels of amber and explored the beautiful and impressive gardens.

The musical highlight of the trip for us was a performance of Swan Lake by the former Kirov Ballet. A close second was a Cossack show, especially as Martin was hauled out of the audience to take part in the dancing, and later in Moscow he played tambourine in a concert given by a professional orchestra! We also heard several short



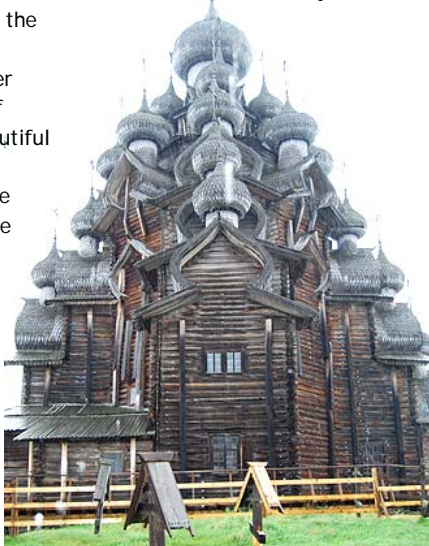
The iconostasis in the Transfiguration Cathedral in Uglich

recitals by vocal quartets and other small groups of professional singers in the churches and monasteries that we visited. The acoustics were just right and the Russian church music transported us to another level.

St. Petersburg and Moscow are connected by a series of rivers, lakes, reservoirs and the canals created to make travel less arduous for the Tsars.

Along the way there were many things of interest, in particular Russian Orthodox churches and monasteries. When we could we sought out 'ordinary' churches to get a feel for what most Russian worshippers visit.

In Moscow, near the university on the hill above the city, was a



Church of the Transfiguration on Kizhi

beautiful church, more ornate than St. James's but closer to our idea of a parish church than the buildings on the tourist trail.

Our most northerly (and the wettest) visit was to the remote island of Kizhi, a UNESCO world heritage site. It is an open-air museum of old Russian wooden buildings including a 14th century church, the oldest surviving, and the amazing 22 onion-domed Church of the Transfiguration, built without a single nail in 1714.

We stopped to see the monastery at Kirillov, founded by two monks who travelled from Moscow in 1397. Their original simple wooden church was replaced over the centuries by a huge complex of buildings surrounded by a massive curtain wall. After the Russian Revolution in 1917 the monastery became a state museum but since 1998 a community of monks has been in residence. It houses a fantastic collection of icons.

In Yaroslavl, the frescos in 17th century St. Elijah's Church are in amazing condition. Fresco and icon painters from there were well known throughout Russia. Icon painting is a sacred art within the Russian Orthodox Church and only those trained and approved by it may produce icons. It is illegal to export them.

In Uglich we visited the church built in honour of Tsar Ivan the

Terrible's son Dimitri who was assassinated there and also the Transfiguration Cathedral. Like most of the churches and cathedrals we saw, the walls and ceilings are covered in highly-coloured frescoes with an iconostasis. This is a wall of icons and religious paintings separating the nave from the sanctuary. The usual pattern is five tiers of paintings, each celebrating different aspects of Christ, the apostles, evangelists, saints and other holy figures. There are three doors into the sanctuary with complex rules regarding who may enter or leave the sanctuary, and by which door.

Then finally Moscow, where St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square shimmered in the brilliant sunshine (it reached 39°C, the warmest since 1934) with vibrantly multi-coloured domes.

The Kremlin was an eye-opener. Yes, it is the centre of Russian government and the stony-faced guards were twitchy, but inside the walls there are four cathedrals and a church clustered round the aptly-named Cathedral Square. All are magnificently maintained though what purpose they served in the soviet era is hard to imagine.

Russia adopted Christianity under Prince Vladimir of Kiev in 988. Russian Orthodox religion derives from Eastern Orthodoxy and the Russian Church is headed by the Moscow Patriarch. After the 1917 upheavals, the Russian Orthodox Church was suppressed.

Under the atheist regimes of the Soviet Union, only 24 out of 2400 churches remained open. Stalin, educated in a religious seminary, re-opened churches during the Second World War, only to order them shut them again after peace was declared.

According to various sources, more than a third of the total population of Russia regard themselves as Christians. The country has some 5,000 Russian Orthodox churches with new ones being built.

Christianity is alive and well in Russia!



Around the Spire

News and events from Hampton Hill and beyond

Bill Jerman celebrates 20 years at school

Our congratulations to Bill Jerman, far right, who has completed 20 years as headteacher of Hampton Hill Junior School. To mark the occasion the staff held a surprise party.



Peter Vannozzi has also just been elected as chairman of the school governors at Hampton Hill Junior.

We were very pleased to welcome Sunil de Mel back to Parish Communion on 28 September and to see Jean Wilson at Harvest Festival. Both have been absent from our congregation for quite some time owing to illness and it is very good to see them in church again.

Can you help us repair some woodwork?

Do you know anyone who has a portable bench saw and some woodworking skills? We are looking for someone willing to give a few hours of their time to repair woodwork in the spire. A couple of handrail spindles must be replaced and some floorboards need attention. Cabinet maker's

skills are not required!

A keen DIY carpenter who could cut wood to size and rough shape on site would be ideal.

If you could help, or know anybody who could, please contact the Parish Office on 020 8941 6003 or Richard Melville on 077 7926 6005.

Congratulations to All Saints' Church, Hampton, celebrating 100 years with a centenary service on Sunday 16 November. Please remember them in your prayers.



Congratulations to Prill and Martin Hinckley on the birth of their granddaughter Erin Vaila, a daughter for Robin and Abi.

Would you like to come to church on Sundays, but need transport? Do you drive to church and have space for extra passengers, perhaps once a month? Although we already have some volunteer drivers, we would like to expand this service. If you can help, or would like transport, please contact Liz Butler on 020 8977 4227.

Got any news?

Please contact Susan Horner
tel 020 8979 9380 or email: smhorner5@yahoo.co.uk

Young Spire

With Prill Hinckley



ONLINE There's much more to read and do online! Young St James's has a guide to our church and patron, Bible stories, puzzles and groups to join.

Quiz - St. James's Sanctuary



▪ Fill the gaps below using the following words: (Communion, disciples, east, congregation, cross, sacred, supper, chancel, table.)

The sanctuary is at the end of the church and is the most part of the church. The **high altar** is a raised used for the celebration of Holy It represents the table where Jesus shared the last with his The altar and two candlesticks stand on the altar. (There is also a table that is carried to the front of the to be nearer the, which acts as an altar for Parish Communion services.)

▪ The space between the top of the altar and the window-sill above is filled with a beautifully carved (font, pulpit, reredos) made of (wood, brass, stone).

1



2



3



▪ Match the pictures above with the descriptions by putting a ring round the correct number below .

- A dove, a symbol of the Holy Spirit (1, 2, 3)
- Wheat and the bread (1, 2, 3)
- Grapes and a chalice of wine (1, 2, 3)



(Rearrange the words in capital letters)

▪ **The niche** is a cut out PLAEC (.....) in the north sanctuary wall. Next to this is an **aumbry** which is a locked cabinet or AFSE (.....) in the wall to hold left-over consecrated (made sacred) BRDEA (.....) and INWE (.....). This can then used to give communion to the ill or housebound at MHOE (.....).

A wax sanctuary lamp stands in the niche next to the aumbry as a sign that this sacrament is here. The PAML (.....) is always burning reminding us that CHTSRI (.....) is always present.



▪ What three scenes are shown in the **east sanctuary stained glass windows**? (The Birth of Jesus, Holy Family and Magi, The Ascension)

Left panel:

Central panel:

Right panel:

- **Sedilia** (above) are stone (crosses, seats, steps)
- They are the south sanctuary wall. (set back into, underneath, at the top of)
- Here are two stained glass (doors, arches, windows).



If you need help, go to the appropriate page on the Young St. James's section of the website.



REVELATIONS

End of the world postponed

Scientists are presently working on an experiment at the European nuclear research centre CERN, hoping to smash two opposing proton beams into each other in a massive apparatus called the Large Hadron Collider, or LHC, in a search for a particle called the Higgs boson.

If this is found we might understand more about the origin of the universe, and rather naively some think it will prove the existence or non-existence of God. Others have worried that the collision of protons at near light speed might produce a black hole, which will gobble up the earth completely.

Serious physicists, while hoping to produce some Higgs particles, give little credit to the other possibilities. All was to have been revealed during the weeks following the start-up of the LHC in September. Unfortunately a serious engineering fault has been found, and the experiment will not start until next year. Something to look forward to.

Maintenance problems

As we have found to our cost, when lead is stolen from any listed church building English Heritage can insist that it cannot be replaced with anything but lead. This is providing a rich harvest for thieves, who have only to wait for a despoiled church to replace its loss before raiding again. Scrap lead is now very valuable. It has been estimated that more than a million pounds' worth of lead is stolen from churches every month.

The Revd Patrick Hastings, rector of St Mary the Virgin at Lychett Maltrvers in Dorset, said it would cost £30,000 to replace the lead stolen from his church. His plan to replace the lead with alternative materials would cost a third of the price, and be unattractive to thieves.

His plan is supported by all relevant authorities except English Heritage, who have apparently blocked the repair. After the theft of lead from the our west porch roof we had the same difficulty, although it was much less expensive for us. Reluctantly, at the insistence of English Heritage, we replaced loss with lead again, although we have put some safeguards in place.

Creationism v Royal Society

Professor Reiss was the Royal Society's Director of Education until mid September, when he was asked to resign. He had suggested that as part of a rounded education schoolchildren should be told what creationists believe.

Professor Reiss probably no more believes in creationism than Richard Dawkins. As *The Guardian* put it: 'The subtlety of Prof Reiss's position was lost in some media reports... headlines...did not convey the nuance of his message.' That subtlety cost him his position with the Royal Society and does little credit to their judgement.

One wonders what we have to fear from teaching children about superseded beliefs, or indeed about alternative religious beliefs. It is to be hoped that schools take a more mature view of rounded teaching, and have more respect for the intelligence of children.

What's On

Charity Christmas Cards

Sunday, 2 November after 9.30am service.
Buy your Christmas cards from us and support a host of charities. Charities represented will be: RNLI, FSID (cot death research and support), Princess Alice Hospice, Shooting Star Hospice as well as our very own St James's Church cards. Fairtrade goods will also be available, including Christian Aid cards.

All Souls Service

Sunday 2 November, 6pm, St. James's Church.
A service in memory of those who have died.

St James's Theatre Club

Wednesday 5 November, Far from the Madding Crowd, 7.45pm, Richmond Theatre.

A new production of Thomas Hardy's enduring novel. Tickets £10. Contact Ria Beaumont on 020 8943 4336. Transport can be arranged.

The London Lectures 2008

Starts Thursday 6 November, 6.30pm, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, St Peter's, Vere Street, London W1G 0DQ.

A series of four lectures, given by Peter Dixon, of Concordis International, on War in the 21st Century. £6 per lecture (£3 concession), £20 for all four lectures (£10 concession). Tickets in advance or on door. Tel 01732 456054

Thameside Clarinet Choir

Friday 7 November, 8pm, The Vineyard Church, The Vineyard, Richmond TW10 6AQ.
The choir, musical director Martin Hinckley, gives a charity concert for the work of God's Love in Action (GLIA). Tickets £5 on door, accompanied children free.

The Bible in an Hour

Sunday 9 November, 7.30pm, United Reformed Church, 35 High Street, Hampton Hill.
Presented by the Globe Players. Tickets £5 from Revd Jenny Snashall (020 8979 3552) or John Latham (020 8255 0994).

Initiatives of Change Forum

Tuesday 11 November, 7.15pm, 24 Greencoat Place, London SW1P 1RD.
Shabibi Shah fled from Afghanistan with her three small children in 1982. She will talk about her country, her experiences as a refugee and her work to help others. The talk is free, but a collection will be taken for expenses. Call 020 7798 6000 to book a seat.

Murder in the Cathedral

Thursday 20 - Saturday 22 November, 7.30pm (matinee also on 22 at 2.30pm), Hampstead Parish Church, Church Row, London NW3.
The Hampstead Players present T S Eliot's timeless drama. Tickets £10 (£8 concession). Tel 020 7431 4620.

Advent Course

Starting Monday 24 November, 7.30pm, St James's Church.

There will be an opportunity in Advent for prayer, study and reflection. You are welcome to come along to the church on all or any of four Mondays - 24 November, and 1, 8 and 15 December. Each evening will begin at 7.30pm and be finished by 9pm. See the weekly pew sheet for more information in due course.

Concordia in Concert

Saturday 29 November, 6.30pm, St Luke's, Sydney Street, London SW3 6NH.

Concordia Voices, musical director Neil Ferris, sing a selection of Advent music, including Lauridsen, Vaughan Williams and Britten. Tickets £10 (£8 concessions) on the door.

Trip to Winchester Cathedral

Saturday 29 November, leaving St James's Church 10am, returning by 5.30pm.

Start your Christmas shopping at the market, go skating, climb the tower, hear the advent bells or simply listen to the cathedral choir practising for their carol service. The cost will be £21, and includes return coach transport and a one hour guided tour of the cathedral. To come add your name to the list on the board in church, telephone 020 8977 9434 or email: elizabethwilmot@talktalk.net

Christingle Service

Sunday 7 December, 9.30am, St James's Church.

It's 40 years since the Children's Society introduced the services to the Church of England. As ever, it is a wonderful opportunity to bring together children, family and friends, forge stronger links between church and schools and celebrate the Christmas message. Whether you are new to Christingle or one of our regular supporters, this fun and festive event has something for everyone. The service focuses on the candle, representing Jesus the Light of the World. Money raised will help to improve the lives of thousands of children.

Vicar's View



...er Vicar, it's about that flower Mrs Brindle's brought back from her foreign holiday...

Your Voice

Ann Peterken

Our Church

Good news in Africa? Yes, and that is why I returned to Rwanda



Africa can so often seem to be portrayed as one small uniform country, inhabited by victims. It is of course a hugely diverse continent of 55 countries, where the good news doesn't get as much attention as it deserves. I hope I can play a small part in restoring some balance.

Some of you will remember that I visited Rwanda in 2006 and found my time there uplifting - not a word people expect when you mention this small central African country. If people have heard of it at all, it is because of one of the worst genocides of modern times. Since those terrible months 14 years ago, Rwanda has picked itself up and wants to be known for how it is today. One claim to fame is that its newly elected Parliament is the first in the world to have women in the majority.

A trip organised by Christians Aware in August allowed me to return to two of the Anglican dioceses that I have kept in touch with by email, Shyogwe and Shyira.

My preparations are worthy of comment. I knew I didn't need to bother much about clothes, freeing me to enjoy gathering useful gifts to take. I've never travelled with such a heavy suitcase, but about two thirds of the contents were destined to stay in Rwanda - baby clothes, wind-up radios and lamps, colouring books, sweets, balloons and similar novelties.

You can imagine how I felt when my case did not appear on the carousel at Kigali airport. My immediate needs were not a problem as I'd done the sensible thing of packing basics in my hand luggage, but the gifts were another matter and several people had kindly given me things. When I woke after a good night's sleep I lay and thought about how I had come to visit people who had so little and that now I had very little. It was a calming moment of realisation and I was determined not to let it spoil my visit. Acceptance was rewarded when my case arrived two days later.

Reunions with Rwandans were extremely happy moments. People would hear we were there and drop in to say hello. Everywhere we went we were graciously received by diocesan staff, parish priests, bishops, health workers, teachers and local people. We had Rwandans for company at many of our meal times, which makes this kind of trip so

special. You're not thinking about the next sight to be ticked off, simply enjoying being with the people who live there.

It was very good to see progress on projects I already knew and to learn about new ones. I was deeply impressed with church programmes to equip young people to earn a living, whatever their level of education. Vocational skills are essential for the vast majority of children who do not pass the public exam to proceed to the limited places at state secondary school - or who simply cannot afford the fees that are required at secondary level.

Mobile phones were in much greater use than two years ago and will greatly help development. They are still beyond the reach of many people, but having access to at least one in a community makes a big difference. Remote parishes are not nearly so cut off and my mobile was invaluable when I left the main group to visit Shyira in the north-west.

Kigali continues to develop into a modern capital and has its fair share of coffee bars, supermarkets and banks. But once you leave the city behind you are quickly aware of a different world. An American family who have lived in Shyira since 2003 tell their guests that the difference between there and Kigali is as great as that between Kigali and the States.

When spending time in a country like Rwanda it is easy to get angry about the lack of global political will to make real progress on the Millennium Development Goals to halve world poverty by 2015. People everywhere deserve the basic essentials we all take for granted. The sums of money promised by developed countries are trivial when compared to the huge sums agreed in the financial crisis. Thank goodness for the many signs of hope among the church communities that I visited, where there is a real effort to enhance peoples' lives.

I have to finish by mentioning the worship at St Mark's in Shyira. Towards the end the priest made a signal and the entire congregation got to their feet and burst in to spontaneous joy. I felt so happy as I watched young and old singing and dancing together, celebrating their faith. I loved it, just as I loved the wonderful gift of my two weeks in Rwanda. God willing, I will return.

If you'd like to comment on something please email the editor: janunnhh@btinternet.com



The War Memorial was built in 1920 following the Armistice in November 1918 at the end of the First World War.

At a meeting with the Revd. R. Coad-Pryor, it was decided to erect a memorial to all those parishioners who had lost their lives during that war.

In all, 151 men and two women from Hampton Hill died during both world wars. Wreaths are laid at the War Memorial in a ceremony on Remembrance Sunday.

