



CHURCH NEWS

DECEMBER 2008



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Tel: 872209

My dear friends,

Well, another year draws to a close. I was talking to someone recently who could not wait for the end of the year - 2008 had been so terrible for them that they were really anxious for a brand new start. I hope that it was not as bad for many of you! I suppose that we can all look back on several low points in the year, whether financially or politically, internationally or personal. Most years are rather like the proverbial 'curates egg' for most of us, I imagine, 'good in parts and bad in parts'. Dare I ask that we try to bury the bad bits and allow the good bits to be carried forward? I have just written up my 2009 diary ready for use (mine is a 13 month Diary starting at the beginning of December.) On the same line I wonder what will be written in it by the end of yet another year? On a personal note I hope that we will have clergy in all of the surrounding parishes soon for the sake of the church families.

Another Christmas, another remembrance of the birth of Jesus for us. I wonder what He thinks as we approach the end of another year, 2000 years after His Nativity. As those young/old eyes look out over the world, does He also feel that He cannot wait to reach the end of the year? How hard have we worked to bring in an age of peace and goodwill, of love and forgiveness? Will the year stand in history books in terms of Credit Crunch or terrorism, Darfur or Zimbabwe?

Most of the pages in my new diary are still almost empty. I pray that the year might see movement towards that peace He sought to bring. I pray that it might bring goodwill, and faith, love and reconciliation. If you are able to join us, or any of the other church families over this special time, you would, I am sure, be more than welcome. Whatever, though, please join in praying for those values He sought to bring in our world, our community, our hearts and our homes - it has to start somewhere, why not here?

Yours very sincerely,

John A Peal.



SERVICES AT ST. PETER & ST. PAUL'S ASH

<u>Time</u>	<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>When</u>
8.00	Holy Communion	Every Sunday in month
10.30	Family Worship	First Sunday in the month
10.30	Family Eucharist	2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th Sundays

SERVICES AT ST. PETER'S RIDLEY

<u>Time</u>	<u>Type of Service</u>	<u>When</u>
9.15	Parish Communion	Every Sunday in the month
6.30	Evening Prayer	Second Sunday in the month only

diary dates - Full details can also be found on the website.

Dec.	Thu.	4 th	Council discussing our application for a Parish Room	
	Sat.	6 th	Bring and Buy 64 Redhill Wood see below	10.30 a.m.
	Sun.	7 th	Babushka Performed in Ash Church	10.30 a.m.
		7 th	Service of Thanksgiving for the gift of children	3.30 p.m.
	Tue.	9 th	Carol singing in Trafalgar Square : leave N.A.G. 6 p.m.	8.00 p.m.
	Sun.	14 th	Ridley Carol Service	6.30 p.m.
	Tue.	16 th	Ash PCC Committee meeting	
	Wed.	17 th	New Ash Green School Christmas Service in church	
	Sun.	21 st	Ash Carol Service	6.30 p.m.
	Wed.	24th	Christmas Eve Christingle services	2.00 and 4.00 p.m.
			Midnight Mass	11.30 p.m.
		25th	Christmas Day Communion Services : Ash	8.00 and 10.30 a.m.
			Communion Service : Ridley	9.15 a.m.
		31st	Ring in the new year at Ash Church	11.30 p.m.
Jan.	Tue.	6 th	Ash Parish Affairs committee Rota meeting	
	Wed.	7 th	Covenanting Churches Committee meeting - Ash Rectory	8.00 p.m.
	Tue.	13 th	Church Affairs Committee meeting	8.00 p.m.
	Thu.	15 th	Deanery Synod Standing Committee meeting	8.00 p.m.
	Thu.	22 nd	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Service at Ash Church	8.00 p.m.

CONFIRMATION 2009

The Confirmation service this year will be on **Sunday April 19th at 10.30 a.m.** at Ash Church. Preparation for adults and young people will begin early in the new year. Please let the Rector or Jacquie peal know if you are interested in exploring the possibility of being Confirmed, that is, in becoming a full member of the church. Coming to the preparation DOES NOT commit you to being Confirmed - that is a decision you take nearer to the time when you have had a chance to look at what it means in terms of spiritual commitment to God and his church.

FROM THE REGISTERS

HOLY MATRIMONY

Oct. 18th James Weller Syme & Allanah Justine Lester. May God bless.

FUNERAL

Nov. 24th Paul Laurence Wickens. Aged 41. May he rest in peace.

CHRISTMAS

As always we have a wide variety of services and times at our two churches, from traditional to children's services, over the Christmas period. Please join us or one of the other church families at some time over the few days of Christmas if you are able to and help bring back some of the real meaning! Whether you are with us or not, however, we really do wish you all of God's blessings over this festive period, and in the new year soon to begin.

MORE WEDDINGS AT ASH AND RIDLEY ??

The rules have recently been changed so weddings can also now take place in a church if parents or grandparents got married in the same church, or they attended regularly that church for six months or more. Contact the Rector for more detailed information if you are interested.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS AT TURNERS OAK AND HANOVER HOUSE

The Youth Club will be singing Christmas Carols at Turners Oak and Hanover House again this year.

Turners Oak on Dec 10th from 7:30pm
Hanover House on Dec 18th from 7:00pm.

We would welcome other members of the congregation to join us again this year for this very festive activity.

Please let Jacquie, Mark or Colin know if you would like to join the Youth Club on either\both occasions.

Colin Irving

REFLECTIONS ON LIFE – GOD’S GREATEST GIFT

In September 2006 a young man called Richard was driving towards Birmingham when he was involved in what the emergency services call an RTA. Richard was dreadfully injured. He was put on a life support machine and his parents waited. Richard survived but was completely paralysed from the neck downwards. He was transferred to another hospital and gradually recovered some use of one arm. Richard was 24. Today, Richard is back to work as an accountant. He has a special chair, a hoist and a full-time carer who studies at Art College and paints while Richard is at work – good therapy for an arduous job. September is a difficult month for Richard, and his exhausted parents have just enjoyed their first holiday since the accident.

The story of another young man who, similarly paralysed, decided with his parents to end his life in a Swiss clinic a few weeks ago shocked the nation. That included many people who are in favour of voluntary euthanasia. I grieved for the young man but even more that his parents who, unlike Richard’s, were unable to help him to take each day at a time and gain some sense of hope for the future.

I have lived with disability for all my life. My father had spondylitis and nephritis and became increasingly disabled until he died on the day before my seventh birthday. Looking back I can recall the times when he was in dreadful pain and unable to move or keep warm with little to relieve it, but I also remember the joy of his last days when we played and ate tea in his bedroom so we could enjoy each other’s company. In my mid-thirties I had a stroke that halted my career as a performing musician. In 1988 it took me out of teaching. I thought it was the end of the world, but the world was a bigger place and I have had a wonderful ministry with blessings that I never believed possible. My grandson, Harry was born with Glaucoma and has only got sight in one eye. He’s on the edge of the Asperger’s spectrum, but he is studying for his GCSEs and plans to read Law. My friend, Brian, has motor neurone disease and finds it a struggle to move. Breathing is becoming difficult, but his sense of humour and zest for life remain.

It is not for me to moralise on how people deal with illness and disability and I feel nothing but sympathy for people who are so frail and bewildered that life is mere existence. I would rather leave the decisions surrounding life and death to the doctors than politicians. Medical ethics play a part in every piece of medical research and ultimately in most decisions. Theologians are involved – the present Chaplain to West London colleges told me recently how much of his work is involved with research students at Imperial College. That may seem to be ducking the issue, but I simply do not have the knowledge to have an opinion. All I know is that life is a great gift and the world, with all its fragility and problems is a beautiful and wonderful place – I hope that does not read as too crass.

I hate the thought of getting old and frail. One of my frequent prayers belongs to that great Christian hero, John Wesley. ‘Lord let me not be useless today.’ Then I remember seeing Pope John Paul shortly before his death and being inspired by the way that he communicated the Gospel in his frailty than when I saw him in his strength and power twenty years earlier.

I am happily agnostic about life after death. As John Bell wrote on the ‘McDonaldisation of Christianity’, *‘Religion is not about packaged answers, but protecting the integrity of questions’*. I believe that the kingdom of God is to be built here and now and dwell in each one of us. I regard the last chapters of the Scriptures in the same way as I regard the first – the writers’ attempts to explain the nature and works of God, which are unexplainable. Perhaps the closest I get to faith is Job, who in his suffering finds a communion with God that even death cannot destroy. I do not hope for a continuation of my own self-centred life, which so many people cling to. Neither do I bargain with God – *‘If I follow you, I will get to heaven’*. He is Lord and the reward is in following him and glimpsing him in his Word and sacraments and in people I meet. Yet, I still pray for my departed family and friends and hope that they are enjoying the nearer presence of God so perhaps I believe more than I think I do!

Three of my family’s friends, all Christians, committed suicide. I note wryly that nobody suggests euthanasia in a clinic for the relief of mental pain, which is less controllable and can be recalled in all its agony at any time. Their funerals asked more questions than they answered, and so does this writing. Rose Macaulay wrote, *‘ ... Life for all its agonies of despair and loss and guilt, is exciting and beautiful ... full of liking and love, at times a poem and a high adventure; and whatever (if anything) is to come after it, we shall not have this life again.’* It is for all of us, that is ‘society’, to do what we can to help people to be cared for lovingly and feel valued, so that God’s greatest gift is not thrown away in moments of pain and despair.

Margaret Withers

23rd October 2008

QUIZ NIGHT

Thank you once again to George and Joan for a very entertaining evening. Their hard work is very much appreciated. We managed to raise £235 for much needed church funds.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE TUESDAY 9th DECEMBER

I have now booked the coach for our annual outing to support the church choir. I have not been able to fill the coach so the cost of seats will be £7 each.

If you have any family or friends who would like to join us there are still 8 seats left.

Please could everyone be at the bus stop at North Square N.A.G. in good time for us to leave promptly at 6 p.m.

Ann Aves 873385





CHRISTMAS "BRING AND BUY"



SATURDAY 6th DECEMBER @ 64 REDHILL WOOD



10.30 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Again this year you will be able to buy gifts, cards, wrapping paper, gift tags and many hand crafted items. There will be a raffle for a Christmas hamper and other Christmas items and a Christmas Tombola.

Sale items can be given before (please see Ann or Pauline) or on the day. SMALL items, in good condition, suitable for Christmas gifts would be most welcome as well as bottles of wine, homemade cakes, pastries or sweets, jam and mincemeat or anything connected with Christmas.

If you haven't been before please come along and bring a friend. Children are most welcome and a good time is guaranteed. Ploughmen's lunches (£3.00 each) will be available from 12.00 noon with tea, coffee and mince pies throughout the day. Entrance is free but donations are welcome and all proceeds will go to the Church.

If you are unable to come but would like to donate maybe a bottle of wine or homemade cake or buy raffle tickets please see Ann or Pauline.

Transport will be available on the day from Turners Oak, Hanover Place etc. Please ring: **Ann** on 873385 to arrange a time.

