

Church of St. Laurence Magazine

Parish including Birchley Heath, Ansley Common,
Ansley Village, Church End

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Mary, Mary, quite contrary, How does your garden grow ?

Dear friends,

I am no gardener but when I go for a walk through Arley woods, even I can tell that some trees are healthy and growing, and others are dying off. The signs are obvious—the colour of the leaves, the blossom (or lack of it) the state of the trunk, all give the game away.

As a vicar, I am involved in growing things—growing churches. What's the difference between a healthy growing church, and one that is dying? Recently we were invited on two training days on Growing Healthy churches. On the first day, we thought about the church using our imaginations and our gut instincts. We were asked questions like, "What colour is your church?" No, that was not an ethnic awareness question, or a comment on our choice of paint. It was asking, what feeling our church gave us—did it feel rather blue, or grey, or a brilliant yellow. As a matter of interest, what would **you** have said? How we feel about our church tells us a lot about whether it is healthy or not.

Church researchers have looked at growing churches, and compared them with other churches and come up with a list of characteristics of healthy growing churches. On the second day we looked at this list, and measured our own churches by them. It is clear that churches that are growing are enthusiastic, adventurous, committed to working out their faith in day to day living, and in the wider society. They have open and loving relationships in the church, involve everyone in their life, and are open to what God wants for them. They are also committed to growing in their own faith, and helping others to come to faith also.

It is also clear that churches in many places are dying. It is a challenging question to look at any congregation, and ask how many, given normal life expectancy, will still be active in twenty—or even ten—years' time. If a congregation is aging, what is preventing younger people joining it?

As I write this, the winter is making everything look dead. In our church we must pray for spring time. Pray with me that new leaves will appear, that new blossom will emerge, and that the sap of the Holy Spirit will rise in spring. **Without Him, everything is dead.** With his power, He can make all things new. As St. Paul said, "Then you will be able to live as the Lord wants and will always do what pleases him. Your lives will produce all kinds of good deeds, and you will grow in your knowledge of God."

That way instead of being "quite contrary" our church will be growing and healthy.

In His love

Gill and Geoff

SERVICES FOR JANUARY 2001

Theme: Talking to God

At St. John's Hall, Ansley Common:

Services at 10.15 a.m. on 14th and 28th January.

At St. Laurence's:

Services are at 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.

January 7—a.m. All-age worship with baptisms,
p.m. Traditional Holy Communion.

January 14—a.m. Holy Communion,
p.m. Traditional Evensong.

January 21—a.m. Morning Prayer,
p.m. Holy Communion.

January 28—a.m. Holy Communion,
p.m. Annual Memorial Service.

Mid-week service: 16th January 9.30 a.m. in the Village church hall.

JANUARY DIARY

9th January 7.30 p.m. Youth Leadership team meets at the Rectory or 135 Tunnel Road.

10th January 1.30 p.m. Churchwardens at the Rectory.

Wednesday Fellowship restarts 17th January: Venue to be announced.

PCC—Thursday, 18th January 7.45 p.m. in St. John's.

Monday Fellowship restarts 22nd January at 1 Nursery Road, 7.30 p.m.

Wednesday, 24th January: Worship team leaders meet at the Rectory.

ALL ARE WELCOME to our annual Memorial Service at 6.30 p.m. on Sunday, 28th January.

We welcome Paige Emmett and Hannah Quick for their baptisms this month.

THANK YOU is in order again:

- **to the churchwardens** for arranging a superbly-organised confirmation service. Bishop Colin was both down-to-earth and able to make it a special occasion, the church looked at its best, the worship and atmosphere were great and the Bishop stayed a long time talking to people. Congratulations to the candidates and their families;
- **also to the Social Committee** and all those who contributed in any way, for their wonderful efforts in organising the Christmas Event;

- and to the **Worship Team** for organising several services last month, which were greatly enjoyed;
- **Thank you also to the LINKS club and leaders**, for bringing a harassed inn-keeper to Jesus' Birthday Party!
- **And to Rev. Philip Bell** for his contribution to the Christmas Midnight Service;
- **And to all who decorated the church** and made it so beautiful for Christmas.

FROM THE REGISTERS

Our prayers and sympathy go to Tony and Joyce Allton on the death of Tony's father, Albert from Holt Road, Atherstone at the age of 93. Also to Chris Reynolds on the death of her father, George Harvey in Arley at the age of 80.

THE FLAT part of the Church hall roof has now come to the end of its life. For several years now we have been spending money patching and mending this and still the water comes in. The hall is used regularly by many different organisations, namely the Links group, the Youth club, the Mind group, the Senior citizens, and the Friendship group. The hall is also used by the Parish council, for elections, other functions and private hire as well as for Church use. It is an asset to the community and would be greatly missed if we were unable to use it.

A decision has therefore been taken by the P.C.C. that this part of the roof should now be replaced with tiles. The cost of this work will be in the region of £6,000 to £7,000. This sum will need to be found and it is hoped some events can be organised during the year to raise this money. If anyone has any ideas of how to raise money or would like to make a donation, please contact one of the hall committee members or the Churchwardens.

SPURGEON CHILD CARE COFFEE EVENING. Many thanks to all who supported the coffee evening and bring and buy in November. A total of £265 was sent to Spurgeon Child Care to help with their valued work with young people in our country. Special thanks to all who collect change in boxes through the year. Margaret Oliver

Morning Worship Team Meeting—Wednesday, 24th January, venue to be arranged.

Tear Fund Sunday—collection £168.80.

EDITORIAL

January 2001

Can you remember this time last year when the New Year was expected with great trepidation? The gas, electric, water and many organisations and businesses had spent millions on updating their computer systems to make them '2000 friendly.' Many people stocked up on candles, bottled water and in some cases food, but the New Year came and all the fears were calmed as all the vital services stayed on, aeroplanes flew safely and supermarkets worked normally. Was it all a great wind-up resulting in panic? We will never know.

January is an anti-climax after all the Christmas excitement, shopping, presents, parties. Now is the time for putting away the tree and trimmings for another year, but also it is a time of new beginnings as we look forward to 2001. January was one of our least favourite months when we were children as we walked to school in the snow and ice. Even though we wore woolly hats, mittens and socks, we suffered with 'hot aches' and many of us, including me, had chilblains to contend with. The worst thing about chilblains was I couldn't have a hot water bottle or sit close to the fire as this made them worse, if that was possible. It wasn't until I was married and a mother myself that I was cured as our doctor put me on a course of calcium for a year and I haven't suffered since.

How do you get on with flights of steps? I realised just how gruelling these can be, especially to elderly people and mothers with push-chairs when we went to Birmingham and we saw how high up we had to go to the Pallasades, but there were two escalators, one following the other, and it was so easy. It made me wonder who invented the escalator as it is certainly a great help to young and old. The only thing I know is that it originated in America.

What strides we have made in technology. We thought it was a step forward when we had a FAX machine, but now we are being asked for our E-Mail address, and I am thinking 'I don't want to do this' but of course I do. Everywhere we go people are talking on mobile phones and it is an absolute mystery how, without any sign of communication, these calls reach their destination. The air about us must be full of little messages going to and fro. What progress the 20th Century brought, some good and some not so good, but it is certain we never stand still.

May the year 2001 bring you health, happiness, and may we meet the new horizons and challenges which are put before us.

Marie Cove.