

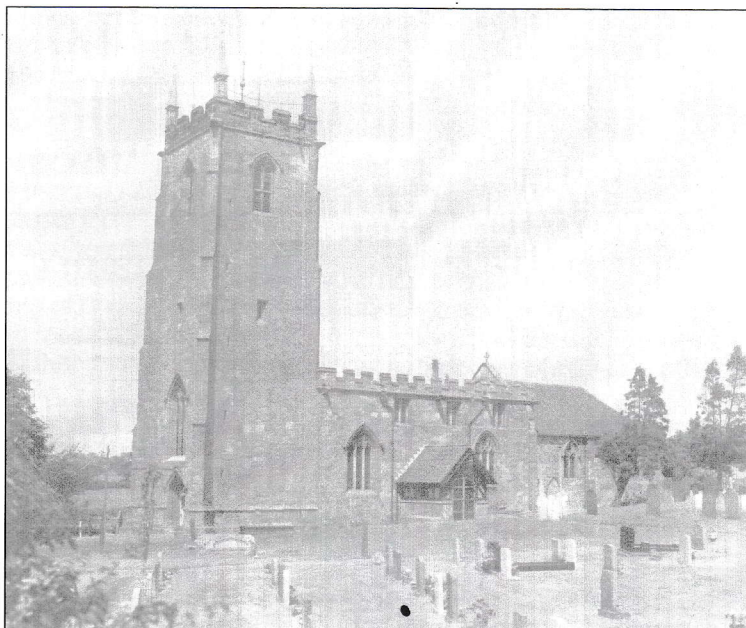
Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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The Vote at General Synod

Perhaps it's been wrong of me but I have never actively campaigned either for women to be ordained priests or for women to be ordained bishops. I guess advocates for women's ministry would say this was typical of men sitting on the fence on an issue that would not effect them directly. I just seemed to be drawn to more urgent issues whether young people have somewhere to go and something to do, whether children aspire to a great future and whether people of all ages and both genders live in hope, grow in faith and rejoice in love.

It was a surprise for me that when the General Synod vote was declared that I felt a sense of embarrassment even shame at the result. How could the General Synod have voted in this way?

I think part of the problem is this. Opponents of the legislation have argued for some time that they accept that in due time women will be ordained bishops. Their argument now is not about whether it is right to have women bishops, but about the safeguards that are in place to protect those who in conscience cannot accept women bishops. So it has ceased to be an argument about what is right and it has become an argument about sensibilities. What should concern us most? The conscientious concerns of those who wish to retain a pattern that has lasted since the beginning of Christian history or the sensibilities of women who want to be bishops and those who support them. If it is only about sensibilities and treating people fairly then those opposed to the ordination of women bishops have the strongest case.

But it is not just about being loving to church leaders and church members. Though I greatly admire the Amish people and their faith, most Christians have believed that we are meant to be guided by the Holy Spirit and to be prepared to change. For myself the key text is Galatians 3:28 "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". This belief is fundamental to Christian truth.

Shortly after Pentecost the Church had to decide whether those who were not Jews could be treated equally and alongside those that were. Arguments from Jesus' own ministry could have been used to point both ways but the decision was clear. Yes the sensibilities of Jews were to be respected but there was no turning back. Jew and Gentile were equal.

Similarly the same argument was made over slavery at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century. Arguments from, say, Paul's attitude to slaves were used to point in favour and against slavery, but in the end the fundamental rights of every human being were accepted. In this Christians led the debate.

Sadly the church has been much less in the foreground to fight for women's rights both in society and the church itself. The Spirit is moving in the world and the Church is scarcely listening. It is time we did. Time at last to put in fulfilment here on earth the visible sign of the eternal truth. We are all one in Jesus Christ.

So that is where I stand. I realise there may be many who do not agree with me. It is a controversial question. But let us be clear the issue is of fundamental importance. The debate is not and cannot be simply about giving as little hurt to as few people as possible.

May 2013 be the year that you discover how special you are to Jesus.

Whatever your age, gender, background or race Jesus died for you and He invites you to join with others to be one with Him.

Your friend and Vicar,

Peter

January St. Laurence's Church – Services

Sunday 6 th	Epiphany	10.30 a.m.	All age Worship
		6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 13 th	Baptism of Jesus	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
		6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday 20 th	Epiphany 3	10.30 a.m.	Morning Prayer
		6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 27 th	Epiphany 4	10.30 a.m.	The Lord is here
		6.30 p.m.	Memorial Service

St John's Church Hall Ansley Common Services

Sunday 6 th	Epiphany	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday 13 th	Baptism of Jesus	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 20 th	Epiphany 3	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday 27 th	Epiphany 4	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion

Discussion Groups

Prayers in the Bible – Wednesday 9th January 7.30 p.m. at 10 Nuthurst Crescent.

Fellowship Group – Tuesday 8th January 7 p.m. in St. John's Church Hall.

From the Registers

The interment of the mortal remains of Nigel Struthers took place on Saturday December 8th and was conducted by Fr. Stephen Day. As Nigel was entrusted to the eternal, loving care of Almighty God his parents, family and friends mourned his sad passing.

Saints Alive

Before ALPHA came into being there was an excellent enquirer's course called Saints Alive. I have used it many times in my ministry to great effect. It is similar to ALPHA but shorter and equally powerful. It is effective both for enquirers, confirmation candidates and as a refresher for mature Christians. I shall be starting this course on Tuesday January 22nd at 7.30pm. If you are not sure ask me, ask those who completed the course when we did it two years ago or come along to the first session without obligation. Please let me know if you are interested and I will furnish further details. Your friend and Vicar, Peter.

Memorial Service

Our annual memorial service will take place at St Laurence on 27th January at 6.30 p.m. This service gives an opportunity for people to remember deceased family or friends. You may wish to recall bereavement from the past year or a more recent loss. There will be time to reflect and to light a candle. The names of all those we are especially remembering will be read out. Please add the name[s] to a list at church or contact one

of the wardens if you would like someone to be mentioned. They can be included even if you are unable to attend.

All names will be entered into our memorial service book which is kept in the church.

Candlemas

A warm invitation is extended to everyone to celebrate Candlemas at St John's on Sunday 3rd February at 10.30 a.m. This will be a joint service at St. John's, so there will be no service at St Laurence that morning. This is the time when we proclaim Jesus as the "Light of the World". Candlemas comes halfway between Christmas and Easter in the church's calendar, when daylight hours are lengthening. During the service we will light candles to represent the light that has come into the world and then extinguish them as we go out to bring that light to others.

Everyone is welcome. If you need help to get to St John's please contact one of the wardens. Please remember there is no morning service at St Laurence.

Live and Local Brassed Up

A musical evening will be held in Ansley Village Church Hall on Saturday 9th February, at 7.30p.m. You will be very welcome at this event, which is possible through the help of Live and Local, an organisation, supported by grants, that promotes live musical entertainment in small venues, mostly in rural areas. Virtuoso multi brass instrumentalist James Stretton, accompanied by pianist Iain Jackson, will blow your socks off! From jazz to classical, on the piccolo trumpet to the tuba - expect the unexpected.

Tickets cost £8.00 for adults and £6 for accompanied children, aged 7 to 15. Light refreshments will be available and a raffle will be held for hall funds.

THANK YOU

Over the Harvest season I spoke in church services and wrote in this magazine and directly to church members drawing everyone's attention to the financial needs of Ansley Church and our Christian responsibility to give as sacrificially as we are able. I asked that everyone on the electoral roll considered giving an additional 90p a week to meet the shortfall of £4,000 per annum.

So you thought, you prayed, you gave, you responded. And what a response! We had £300 in donations for which we are most grateful. But most amazing of all we had additional pledges of £81.50p a week. If we add in the recoverable Gift Aid this adds up to £100.50p a week or over £5,000 a year. This is a truly stupendous result. May I thank you all for contributing to this excellent total. But most of all let us give glory to God who has answered our prayers and freed us from financial worries to concentrate on the ministry he has given us.

Your friend and Vicar, Peter.

Remembrance Day

A total of £44.65 was raised from the sale of poppies.

Christmas Fayre

A final total will be notified after sales of wreaths have been added to the current sum.

Marie's Christmas Event

A total of £105 was raised for St John's Church Hall funds from refreshments, craft or produce sales and a raffle at this event which was organised and hosted by Marie and Dave Cove. Thank you to all who attended or supported in any way.

Spurgeon's Child Care

Many thanks to all who came and to those who donated, brought, or bought items at the coffee evening, hosted by Margaret Oliver. £380 has been sent to Spurgeon's to help with their tremendous work supporting vulnerable and less fortunate children in this country. It also gave us an opportunity to chat, enjoy cake and socialise on a dull November evening.

St. John's Christmas Prize Bingo

The retiring organisers provided superb prizes, everyone had great fun and a total of £130 was made for hall funds.

Christmas Tree Festival at St Laurence's Church

This event, involving many different individuals and groups from the wider community, had been open for one weekend at the time of going to press. The trees looked spectacular and demonstrated the ingenuity and flair of the decorators. A full report will be included next month.

Christmas concert at St Laurence and Soup, Sweet and Carols at St John's
See next month's magazine for reports on these two events.

Cleaning

Thank you to everyone who has kept the church clean and tidy over the past year. A new church cleaning rota will start from February 2013. If you are able to help with this task please contact one of the churchwardens.

Prayer Requests

If you would like someone or a particular situation remembered in prayer at our Sunday Services both at St. Laurence and St. John's please hand the slip below to a member of the church congregation or contact the Vicar on 024 7639 9070. Please remember the vicar would be pleased to visit anyone who is sick, but he does need to know, again please ring.

Please pray forwho is

When you read this magazine, we will be into a New Year – 2013 – where on earth did 2012 go to? Christmas has come and gone and we are starting to get back to some normality after the mayhem. We wonder afterwards where we found all the time for the things we had to do and the money to buy all the presents, also the energy for the cooking, parties, games etc. Perhaps Christmas rejuvenates us and inspires us. I know it does me, but then after New Year's Eve, everywhere is more peaceful and it's 'feet up time'.

Have you heard the saying 'God loves a cheerful giver?' Well in the last couple of months 'cheerful givers' have been in abundance. We collected 18 shoe boxes from Ansley Parish, all filled with goodies, a donation and lovingly wrapped; 10 candle boxes and three envelopes were filled for the Christingle at St. John's in aid of the Children's Society (total in next edition); The Christmas event raised £105.70p for St. John's. Phew! All I can say is 'Thank you' to all those who gave on behalf of all those who benefited from all the 'cheerful givers'.

Just before Christmas the T.V. showed these enormous aeroplanes taking off for Afghanistan taking parcels for servicemen. They also took boxes made up of various items given by donations from the public. They reminded me of when my elder brother was in the R.A.F. during WW2 when my mother would send him a home baked cake and also knitted socks. This must have started my love of knitting socks, as I love knitting these more than any other item.

For a long time all the large supermarkets have rejected funny shaped vegetables, but now because of the horrible summer, they will have no choice but to sell these. I say 'why not?' after all a carrot is a carrot no matter what shape and they taste the same. Hopefully.

Did you know it is 20 years since the first text message was sent on a mobile 'phone and I have not yet learned how to do it? I was telling my grandchildren about the first mobile 'phone – it was huge and they thought this was hilarious. Also the fact you couldn't take photographs on them or send text messages – how did we survive?

This is January, loved by few, but still the buds are peeping green and new. Spring will be here before we know, and soon forgotten the ice and snow.

Marie Cove