

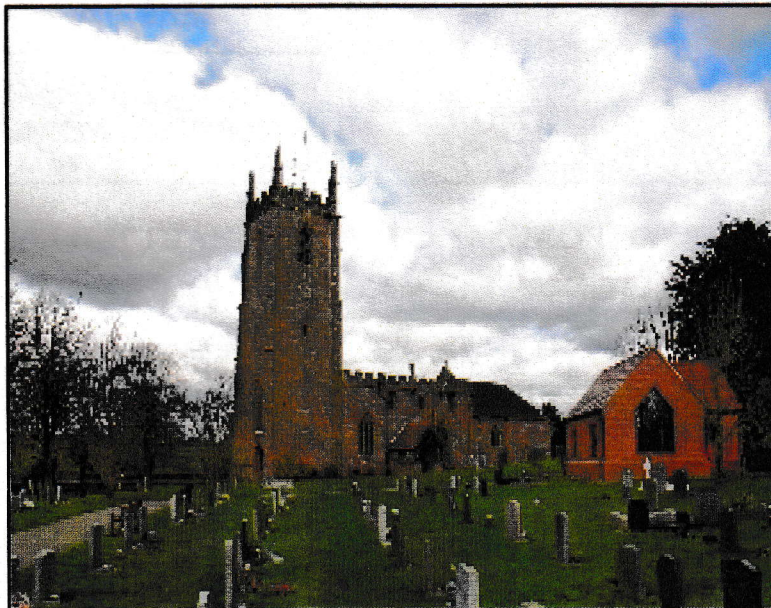
Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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Do they have Christmas in heaven?

One of the loveliest features of my job is visiting schools and one of the best times is when I have a chance to listen to and try to answer the children's questions. In the autumn I went to Nursery Hill Primary School where I talked to one class about Harvest and another about my work. Earlier this week two classes came to St. Michael's from Arley Primary School to learn about funerals.

After acting out a Thanksgiving Service at the church it was time for questions. And the great thing about children's questions is that you never know what you'll be asked. After a few questions about funerals, one lad raised his hand.

"Will there be Christmas in heaven?"

For a brief moment I hesitated. Then I answered:

"Yes there will be Christmas - heaven will be full of celebration, giving and receiving."

I didn't add, for this would seem quite wrong to say to children,

"It will be the perfect Christmas - no stress, no searching for parking places, no worries about money and no anti-climax when it's all over. Just full of unadulterated fun and magic."

And perhaps I should have added that's what Christians want to bring to this world - joy and celebration, love and sharing, light and life shining in and through the darkness - capturing the real essence of Christmas and bringing it to others every day of the year.

"Your will be done," we pray, "Your Kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven."

I passed on to other questioners. Before I could conclude the lad's hand was up again.

"Will there be birthdays in heaven?"

Here was a lad who was clearly used to driving a hard bargain.

"Yes," I replied, "There will be birthdays."

I did get that right, didn't I Lord?

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL,

Your friend and Vicar,

Peter

Peter writes:

One of the loveliest events of my year is the dawn confirmation on Easter morning at Coventry Cathedral. This will be my last such service and my last confirmation course before I retire in June 2016. If you are interested in attending the course, please let me know as soon as possible. Do remember that everyone is welcome.

January St. Laurence's Church Services

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Sunday 3 rd | Epiphany | 10.30 a.m. | Morning Prayer |
| | | 6.30 p.m. | Holy Communion |
| Sunday 10 th | Epiphany 1 | 10.30 a.m. | Holy Communion |
| | | 6.30 p.m. | Evensong |
| Sunday 17 th | Epiphany 2 | 10.30 a.m. | Christmas Screen |
| | | 6.30 p.m. | Holy Communion |
| Sunday 24 th | Epiphany 3 | 10.30 a.m. | Holy Communion |
| | | 6.30 p.m. | Evensong |
| Sunday 31 st | Candlemas | 10.30 a.m. | Joint at St John's |
| | Memorial | 6.30 p.m. | Memorial |

St John's Church Hall Ansley Common Services

| | | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|-------------------|
| Sunday 3 rd | Epiphany | 10.30 a.m. | Family Service |
| Sunday 10 th | Epiphany 1 | 10.30 a.m. | Holy Communion |
| Sunday 17 th | Epiphany 2 | 10.30 a.m. | Family Service |
| Sunday 24 th | Epiphany 3 | 10.30 a.m. | Holy Communion |
| Sunday 31 st | Candlemas | 10.30 a.m. | Candlemas + St L. |

From the Registers

The funeral of Edwin Pudge (92) took place at St. Laurence's Church on Tuesday 9th December, followed by committal at The Heart of England Crematorium. Eddie to his family, Ted to his friends, was full of fun, courageous, practical and a hard worker. He was a wonderful husband to Doreen, whom he married at St. Laurence's in 1944 and who sadly passed away in 2003, and a superb Dad, Grandad and Greatgrandad. Eddie is greatly missed by all who knew him but most of all by his beloved family.

Girl's Brigade Parade at St John's

On Sunday 10th January the Girl's Brigade will be attending the morning service at St John's Hall, Ansley Common.

Candlemas

This will be a joint service at St John's, so there will be no morning service at St Laurence's. We look forward to joining St John's congregation in marking the end of the Christmas season.

Memorial Service

This service provides an opportunity to remember loved ones and give thanks for their lives. Candles may be lit and time for quiet contemplation is incorporated into the service. Names on a remembrance list will be read out. The bereavement may be a recent event or a past loss and you do not need to attend the service yourself to have someone's name included. Do add a name to the list, or let a church member know if you would like someone to be remembered in the evening service on 31st January at 6.30 p.m..

Advance Notice

We will be joining women around the world for a special service on Friday 4th March. The service this year has been prepared by the women of Cuba. A date for your new diary! More details will be in next month's magazine.

Ansley Village Christmas Social and Raffle

This proved to be a very enjoyable way to begin the Christmas season. Singing carols, playing a game of bingo with mulled wine and a mince pie and having a chat preceded the drawing of the winning tickets from the Christmas raffle. A visit from Santa was much appreciated by both children and adults. The raffle raised £486 and there was a further sum of £51 from the bingo and donations, also for church funds. Thank you very much to all who helped to organise everything and of course to all who came. A special well done if you were in fancy dress!

St John's Christmas Fair

The afternoon was very well attended, with a good number of stalls, tombola and a raffle. The cakes were delicious and there was a buzz of conversation around the room. £205 was made for Hall funds. We would like to thank all who organised this event and all who supported it.

St Laurence's Tenth Christmas Tree Festival Interim Report

We were pleased to welcome a steady stream of visitors during the first weekend, despite or perhaps because of the strong winds and rain. A warm church and a hot drink were appreciated! The second weekend brought along more visitors, keeping helpers on refreshments busy in the annexe. The article placed in the Flower Arranger magazine has encouraged people to come from a wide area of the country to see our festival and how it is organised.

A representative from the charity Doorway was pleased to report that they had received an anonymous donation from someone who had seen their tree in church.

Concert at St Laurence's

It was a delight to listen to the excellent singing and playing from Jess, Richard and Jo. The decorated trees around church helped to create a festive atmosphere and the refreshments were much appreciated. Thank you to the performers, organisers and the audience for coming along.

St John's Christmas Social event

See report in next month's magazine.

Financial Report

As we start a New Year many of us take a look at our finances. Yes, we all have to think about money at some point and the church is no exception. The actual figures for the year end were not available when writing this, but in 2015 our finances have been greatly helped by donations and fees from the many occasional services (baptisms, weddings and funerals) that have taken place during the year. In some years there are very few occasional services and this can affect our finances. Looking a little closer at the income we receive, it is clear that our average Sunday service giving is, for many different reasons, **decreasing**, all be it slowly. This should not cause a major problem in 2016, but if this issue is not addressed at this stage, it would be poor management on our part for the future.

On the expenses side we are facing a parish share increase of some 4%. This is due mainly to the increase in the training bill for new clergy, as the "baby boomer" generation reach retirement, which is a problem being faced by many organisations. Also the PCC

feel it is important to ensure that we pay our full parish share and is trying very hard to achieve this. We are approaching this sum which amounts to half the cost of having a "Vicar".

You may be asking, "Well, what can I do?"

Firstly pray.

Then

- Consider if you can see your way to adding just a few pence to your giving.
- Can you put aside the money you would have given if you cannot attend when you would have normally come to a service?
- Would Free Willing Offering Envelopes help? Speak to one of the PCC members.
- Can you give via Gift Aid if you pay tax in any form? Please have a confidential word.

Remember just a few pence from a lot of people soon make extra pounds and it all adds up.

How does Peter's retirement affect the church and its finances?

Although we may not have a vicar in place from June, we still have to pay our full parish share as the money contributes to the whole work of the diocese and we will be supported even if a vicar is not appointed immediately.

Future plans

A new year often brings along new challenges and opportunities. We wish Peter and his family well as he makes plans for his retirement and thank him now for his commitment to and his work in our parish over almost thirteen years. We will be marking his retirement later this year.

When there is a vacancy for a vicar a formal process has to be undertaken before a new appointment can be made. This can often mean a gap of six months before the matter is settled. Please be assured that the wardens and the PCC will keep you as fully informed as possible about this process.

A Fond Farewell

We wish Mandy and Bill [Gordon] Watts many happy and enjoyable years in their new home near Oxford. We are sad to see them leave after 42 years in the village but know they will make new friends and involve themselves in local activities once they have settled in. In spite of short notice of the actual removal date, we were able to say farewell during the morning service at St Laurence's on 13th December, when they were presented with a beautiful snowy photograph of St Laurence's. Their family will be so pleased to have them nearby. They have promised to return to Ansley from time to time, so we can look forward to their visits.

Prayer Requests

If you would like someone or a particular situation remembered in prayer at our Sunday Services both at St. Laurence's and at 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 for who is

January 2016

When you read this, we will be heralding 2016. For some of us 2015 held some good memories along with some not so good. Our eldest Granddaughter got married, which was a joy, especially to see all the family together and enjoying the day. However, some people will be glad to see the end of 2015 and hoping 2016 will be better.

Facebook's Mark Zuklenberg and his wife, on the birth of their daughter, will give away 99% of their wealth, which amounts to billions, to good causes. What a wonderful gesture, and when their daughter grows up she should be very proud of her parents.

Someone wrote to the newspaper saying that, as a 15 year old in 1946 her salary as a junior clerk was £75 a year. She retired in 1988 having stayed at the same company all her working life. This person asked what this salary would be worth today. The answer is that £75 would be the equivalent of almost £14,000, but let's face it, compared to the salaries today, this is very little.

We have a notice on our porch window saying we do not buy from the door, which I might say is not very effective, but when we were children the people in the larger 'posher' houses in our street had metal plaques on their front gates saying 'No hawkers, no circulars.' We didn't mind not having one of these notices as we were always glad to see the Indian gentleman in his turban, as he opened up his case to show his wares, the Betterware man and the Co-op man who collected the money for the cheques our mam had to buy our shoes. Our Dad never knew because he didn't believe in 'tick'. However, these people brightened up our lives.

May 2016 bring more healing than pain,
More sunshine and less rain,
More laughter, fewer tears,
God's blessings scattered throughout the year.

Marie Cove.