

Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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

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New beginnings

At this season we look to a new year, bringing us hope and anticipation of good things to come. People may study the stars and read their horoscopes. Will they predict good fortune for them?

On 6th January we celebrate the season of Epiphany, the time in the church's calendar when we remember the three wise men. They followed a bright star all the way to Bethlehem because of a prediction that this star foretold the birth of a new king. We hear of a brutal, horrific act of cruelty against little boys of less than twelve months old by a jealous, obsessed man called King Herod. But we also hear of God's providence in securing His son's life in order to complete God's purpose here on earth.

What will this year bring for us? Good health, happiness and prosperity, we hope. But if it doesn't we know that our God will be beside us all the way, until we come out the other side. Our strength, our sustenance and our future are all in His hands. Maybe this prayer will strengthen us in the days, weeks and months to come.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO YOU ALL!

Gwyneth, Reader at St Lawrence

New Year	
Mysterious new year	All he allows in his infinite wisdom
So wrapped in reserve and surprise	Is for my ultimate good
You have no reason to feel smug	And his greatest glory.
Or even condescending.	Consequently, New Year,
After all, the majestic God	You cannot trick or disillusion me
Has full knowledge of you	By your baffling unexplainables
Just as he has of me.	Or your feverish activity.
There is not an issue that you can evade.	My times are in the hands
Furthermore you are powerless	Of my sovereign God
To do anything to me	Whose power is limitless
That God does not permit.	And whose love for me is everlasting.
Ruth Harms Calkin	

January St. Laurence's Church Services

Sunday	1 st	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St John's
			6.30 p.m.	No service
Sunday	8 th	Epiphany	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
			6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday	15 th	Epiphany 2	10.30 a.m.	Christmas Screen
			6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	22 nd	Epiphany 3	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
			6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday	29 th	Candlemas	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St John's
			6.30 p.m.	Memorial Service

St John's Church Hall Ansley Common Services

Sunday	1 st	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St John's
Sunday	8 th	Epiphany	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	15 th	Epiphany 1	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday	22 nd	Epiphany 2	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday	29 th	Candlemas	10.30 a.m.	Special Service

Please Note

During the interregnum it may be necessary to change the pattern of services from time to time at fairly short notice. This would be to enable visiting clergy to hold a communion service.

From the Registers

Baptisms

Dalilah Faith Vervienne Hart celebrated her baptism on 20th November 2016, supported by her parents Adam and Emma, her Godparents, family and friends.
This baptism was conducted by the Reverend Rick White.

Evalyn Sarah Critchlow celebrated her baptism on 27th November 2016, supported by her parents, Lee and Helen, her Godparents, family and friends.
This baptism was conducted by the Reverend Kate Massey.

We ask for God's blessing on each of these children as they step out on the path of faith and on their parents and Godparents who will encourage and support them.

Interment of ashes

Mrs Sheila Melville's ashes were buried in the churchyard on Tuesday 6th December.

Donations

The members of the P.C.C. would like to thank all who have given donations in memory of Ron Morewood. These amounted to a sum of £130 which has been sent to the church via the undertakers.

Bequest

The members of St Laurence's P.C.C. acknowledge the receipt of a bequest of £2000 from the late William Davis. Following discussion, this has been apportioned as follows; £1000 to the Churchyard Fund, £800 to the Fabric Fund and £200 to general running costs. This generous gift is much appreciated.

Candlemas

St Laurence's congregation are invited to join the members of St John's church to celebrate Candlemas on Sunday 29th January in St John's Hall at 10.30 a.m. The Girl's Brigade will be parading at this service, which will be lead by the Reverend Greg Bartlem. There will not be a service at St Laurence's on that morning.

Memorial Service

You are warmly invited to the annual memorial service at St Laurence's at 6.30 p. m. on Sunday 29th January. Candles will be lit during the service in memory of the departed. Names to be read aloud will be collected a week or so before this service, so do make sure your loved one(s) will be included. You may give names even if you are not able to attend church that evening and the people named do not have to be recently deceased. This service will be lead by the Reverend Ricarda Witcombe, who is Chaplain at George Eliot Hospital.

St John's Bingo

This event saw more people than usual gathering for an evening of fun. £100 was raised for hall funds.

St John's Christmas Fayre

The afternoon was well supported, with stalls, raffle and refreshments to tempt the buyers. This was a pleasant social occasion and £200 was made. This year St John's members have given £50 to each of the following charities; the N.S.P.C.C., Air Ambulance and Zoe's Place.

Spurgeon's Coffee Evening

Thank you to everyone who supported the Spurgeon's coffee evening by attending on the night, giving donations or by collecting cash through the year. A sum of £350 has been sent to the charity.

St Laurence's Christmas Festive Fun

A sociable and relaxing time was spent enjoying each other's company, playing a game of bingo trying our luck by dipping into the red bag and singing carols. The drawing of the prizes for the Christmas Raffle drew the evening to a close. £98.30 was raised from the evening itself and £383 plus other donations from the sale of raffle tickets leading up to the event. Thank you to everyone who organised the evening, came on the night, donated prizes, sold raffle tickets or helped in any other way.

Christingle Service

This service kept the congregation alert as a prompt reply to a quiz question resulted in a fun size tube of Smarties hurtling towards the person giving the correct answer. The

Reverend Rick White conducted the service, interviewing an older and younger member of the congregation about what Christmas meant or means to them. He also gave the views of two young people who have received help from The Children's Society. The lighting of the Christingle candles reminded us of the earth, the seasons, Christ's death on the cross for us and Jesus' coming as the light of the world. The cash collection and "coins in a candle" amounted to £116.25, which has been sent to The Children's Society.

St Laurence's 11th Christmas Tree Festival

The festival began under very different weather to last year, when mud outside soon became mud inside! This year the first weekend enjoyed dry weather. The first Saturday was busy but it was quieter on the Sunday. We have had very favourable comments both in the Visitors' Book and verbally. Once more a great variety of ideas were on show. The church emitted the scent of pine, evoked a sense of wonder and offered a warm welcome to all who entered.

The weather was less kind on the Sunday of the second weekend but did not put off our visitors. At the time of sending this magazine to be printed, the sum raised had reached £1500, with the last weekend still ahead. A final report will be placed in the February magazine.

Shoebox Appeal

Approximately twenty boxes were sent from the parish to enable children who have very little to receive some gifts at Christmas. Thank you to all who took part.

Reports next month

St John's Christmas Social, Christmas Tree Festival and the Concert of Traditional Music.

The Churchyard

The PCC much appreciates the well cared for appearance of the churchyard. There are strict rules for church burial grounds that are different from those applying to council cemeteries. Over the winter months, when the grass is not being cut, wreaths may be left on the ground (well fastened down!). These must be removed before the first grass cutting of the new season, so the mower can cut between the headstones. A reminder will be given, but any wreaths that are still there when the annual graveyard survey is done in February will be removed, as will unapproved objects.

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 a warden. Phone numbers are on the front page of this magazine. Please remember that a visit can be arranged to anyone who is sick, but the wardens do need to know, so again please ring.

Please pray for who is

January, 2017

They say that time flies when you are enjoying yourself; well according to this, I must have had a ball because my feet haven't touched the ground during the last year, as one week merged into another. However, I never make any New Year's Resolutions as they seem almost to be there to be broken.

On the theme of time – it is strange for me to see the Pop Stars of the 60's now literally 'old men', no longer recognisable from the bright faced young men, idolized by millions. They certainly had their moment in the sun and even now in their twilight years, many of them are still making records and doing concerts.

It got me thinking recently when I was doing the church collection, what it was like years ago. My mother would give us a halfpenny each (5 of us) to put on the plate, but by the time the plate reached us the 'rich people' in the front pews had put on their half crowns, 10 shilling notes and pound notes, so our small halfpennies went unnoticed. However, 5 halfpennies was a lot of money to our parents and probably was equal to the sums put on by the richer people in proportion to their wealth.

When did people start kissing under the Mistletoe? One explanation is that in an old Norse legend, Balder, son of the goddess Frigga was killed by an evil god with an arrow made of Mistletoe. Frigga wept tears that turned to white berries, which brought her son back to life. She then blessed the plant and promised a kiss to all who passed under it.

On the threshold of this New Year let us pray for world peace on earth, and may the world turn its face to the sun and its back on conflict and cruelty giving to each and everyone tranquillity of mind and spirit, happiness and health.

Marie Cove.