

Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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

No. 870

DECEMBER 1997

Price 20p



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Dear Friends,

Some years ago I watched a group of youngsters perform a short play. The main character was a photographer, who rushed about yelling at everyone as he tried to get his photo of the Nativity just right. He arranged it carefully—Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, the donkey and the ox.

Nobody did what he wanted, of course, and in exasperation he shouted at his assistant to get rid of a dirty old box. Then he took the picture.

When it was developed, they all discovered that the dirty old box was actually the manger. The baby Jesus had been removed from the photo—by mistake!

Christmas can be such a busy time, especially if children are around. We want it to be a special time for them, and we all spend weeks (and money) shopping, planning and preparing. It can also be a very stressful time—statistics show that the divorce rate is highest after Christmas and summer holidays.

It's easy to forget the Reason for the Season—that God sent his own Son to become a human being, with a human mother, simply because he loves us so much. If he is at the centre of our Christmas—and of our lives—he can give us peace and joy, and help us with our problems.

We're here to help too—and to invite you to our Christmas services. Children are especially welcome at 10.30 on Sunday 21st. In the evening are our Nine Lessons and Carols, and then the Midnight services—10.00 p.m. at St. John's Hall, Ansley Common, and 11.30 p.m. at St. Laurence where my father, the Rev. Philip Bell, will celebrate Christmas Communion.

We hope these will help us all to make sure Jesus is in our Christmas. May he bless each one of you.

Gill and Geoff Kimber.

Answers to November Quiz:

1—St. Patrick; 2—St. George; 3—St. Christopher; 4—St. Nicolas;
5—St. Peter; 6—St. Augustine; 7—St. Denis; 8—St. Cecelia;
9—St. David; 10—St. Joan (Joan of Arc).

WHAT YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BAPTISM . . .

(but were afraid to ask !)

What is Baptism ?

Baptism (sometimes called Christening) has been around for about 2000 years. We first read about it in the Bible, when John the Baptist baptised people in the River Jordan—provided they were sorry for what they had done wrong.

John was Jesus' cousin, and knew Jesus was special—the Son of God, who died on the cross to rescue us from going to hell because of our sins, and who then rose from the dead and was seen by hundreds of his friends. He went back to Heaven, and sends his Holy Spirit to those who believe in him.

In the Bible many thousands of people believed that Jesus was the Son of God. As a sign of this faith, they were baptised. As time went on, whole households were baptised, and that included children.

So baptism has been around a long time, and is always used as a sign that someone believes in Jesus and wants to live with the help of his Spirit. Many parents are surprised when I tell them that baptism is not really about the baby—it's about them ! It's about whether they believe, and whether they are willing to bring the baby up within the Christian church.

The Baptism service says "children who are too young to profess the Christian faith are baptised on the understanding that they are brought up as Christians within the family of the church." Parents have to publicly state their beliefs, and promise to come to church regularly with their child, and bring him or her up to pray and to live by trust in God.

It's a big commitment.

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Does baptism:

— give the baby a Christian name ?

No. This happens when you register the baby's birth.

— guarantee the child will go to heaven ?

No. Jesus welcomes all children.

— give the baby a good start ?

It is a good start, but the promises parents make in the service must be taken seriously, or the baptism is pointless.

— mean that my child can get married in church ?

No. The Church of England offers weddings to unbaptised people these days.

But the grandparents want it done . . .

Grandparents can be very important in the life of a child. But the parents are most important, because they are the ones to teach values and standards. What do the parents really want ?

Doesn't the baby need godparents, so that they can look after the family if anything happens to the parents ?

Godparents have no legal standing. You have to make a will and name people to be guardians for it to be legal. 'God' parents should be people who can teach the child about God.

WHAT HAPPENS IF . . .

— I'm not really sure of what I believe, or I don't feel ready for such a big commitment—but I would really like a service for my baby ?

That's all right ! All we ask is that parents are honest—after all, God knows our thoughts any way. We offer such parents a service of **Thanksgiving and Blessing**—a lovely service to which you can invite family and friends. In it we thank God for the baby, pray for the parents, and give the baby a special blessing. This is what Jesus did when parents brought their children to him—he took them in his arms and blessed them.

Instead of godparents the baby can have sponsors. We can sometimes do these services in the afternoons, whereas baptisms are required by church law to take place during the main Sunday service.

Recently the Church Council adopted a baptism policy which asks all parents wanting baptism to attend church regularly for 3 months before the baptism date is set, and to continue to do so afterwards.

This gives people time to prepare properly before taking on the solemn promises of baptism: to think about the Christian faith, to ask questions and to discuss things in a relaxed way. Baptism means:

- going to church as a family
- praying and teaching the baby Bible stories
- following God's standards in everyday life
- growing in faith together,

Parents making this commitment will have the church family welcoming them and encouraging them.

Parents choosing Thanksgiving and Blessing can set a date that's mutually convenient. If, later on, parents decide they want to make the commitment necessary for baptism, they are welcome to do so. They will also get a big welcome!

Baptisms will take place in the Family services, now on the **FIRST** Sunday of each month.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with your queries.

Rev. Gill Kimber.

Tel.: 01676 540378.

Ansley Common Youth Sweep the Board. Congratulations to Ansley Common Youth Club who achieved both 1st and 2nd Prizes in the Warwickshire Association of Youth Clubs Postal Quiz. The prizes were presented by Janice Langley at the Club on Wednesday, 19th November.

DIARY OF EVENTS FOR DECEMBER

Sunday, December 7th

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion.

10.30 a.m. Morning Service.

6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.

Sunday, December 14th

10.30 a.m. Holy Communion.

6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.

Sunday, December 21st

10.30 a.m. FAMILY CHRISTMAS SERVICE.

6.30 p.m. NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS.

Sunday, December 28th

10.30 a.m. Family Communion.

6.30 p.m. Evening Prayer.

Christmas Services:

Wednesday, December 24th

10.00 p.m. St. John's Communion Service.

11.30 p.m. St. Laurence, Communion Service.

Bus Timetable for 6.30 p.m. Evening Service:

Ansley Village turn 6.00 p.m.

Ansley Common St. John's 6.20 p.m.

Return Journey from Parish Church 7.45 p.m.

Fellowship Meetings: 3rd and 17th December.

St. John's Services: 14th and 28th December.

St. John's Children's Club: Every Tuesday 6.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.

To book St. John's Hall: Contact Pat Barnes, 69 Ansley Common.

Summary of September's P.C.C. Meeting

CHURCH DUTIES: Extra Sidespeople required for morning services.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS:

CHRISTMAS EVENING: Friday, December 12th.

AMATEUR DRAMATIC EVENING: January 16th.

CHILD PROTECTION: Record books distributed for Sunday School, Village and Ansley Common.

Fire Station contacted and would meet in both halls to discuss drill.

MAGAZINE: Price increase to cover costs—25p per copy, £2.70 for annual subscription. Suggestion that added local news be included.

BLACK HEADSTONES: At the PCC I had to point out that black headstones are not permitted under the rules laid down by the diocese. It was therefore agreed that we should in future not allow them in our graveyard. I regret that the diocese lays these rules upon us, but feel that we have to keep to them. Anyone with any queries about this should contact me for details.

Geoff Kimber, Priest-in-Charge.

NEW BAPTISM POLICY: Please see special article.

Harvest Festival—Services:

Cash on Plate	£123.33
Harvest Sale	£121.07
Fruit sold for harvest	£ 63.00
Donation	£ 2.10
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Total	£309.50

Although congregation numbers were depleted owing to various reasons, Harvest went well. The sponsored sing-a-long after the evening service raised a further £252. Everyone seemed to enjoy the weekend. Thanks to everyone for gifts, time and all the other things that go into making such times, giving us all the opportunity to give thanks to God for all his good to us. Marcia Sutton.

Children's Society. Thank you very much to all those who supported the coffee evening and gave so generously to this charity. The Children's Society's aim is to ease the pressures on those who feel disadvantaged through problems such as handicap, stress, drugs or homelessness. £230 has been sent to help these needy children in Great Britain. Many thanks for your continued support.

Margaret Oliver.

Christmas Evening Event: 12th December, 7.30 p.m.

On Friday, 12th December we are holding a "Christmas Evening" in Ansley Church Hall, commencing at 7.30 p.m.

Any contributions for the Preserves Stall (pickles, jams, chutney, marmalade, etc.), Christmas Stall (gifts, decorations, Christmas arrangements, jewellery, etc.) or Bottle Tombola Stall (fitted bottles of any size or shape) would be most welcome.

Offers of cakes for the Cake Stall or mince pies/scones for the Refreshments—would be greatly appreciated. It would be helpful if you could either sign up your offer of cakes in the Church porch or let Margaret Oliver know (395674) so that a rough estimate of promised quantities may be made.

Holly wreaths are once again being made by Margaret Antill. You can order these by either 'phoning 01827 874520 or seeing Margaret at the Christmas Evening.

A Raffle will also be run for this event. Tickets are 20p each.

We hope to round off the evening with some Christmas songs, carols and maybe a few other surprise items.

As this will be slightly different to our previous Christmas Fairs we hope you will be able to come along in December—if only for a laugh and a natter. Moreen Freestone & Margaret Kimberley.

"Sponsored Sing-a-longs." To date £419 has been raised from the two sessions, which is splendid. Many thanks to singers and sponsors! Any outstanding monies are asked to be handed in as soon as possible. Thank you! Margaret Kimberley.

St. John's Christmas Fayre: This will take place at St. John's Hall on Saturday, 13th December at 2.30 p.m. Lots of stalls, etc. Please come along and support us.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTER

Baptisms: The theme of the Baptism Service on Sunday, 16th November was "Building" and all the congregation from the very youngest to the oldest enjoyed building as each received one Leggo brick. We welcome Chloe Jasmine Phillips and Connor James Phillips into the family of the church. May God bless them and keep them both in his love and care all their days.

Funerals: The Funeral took place on 14th November of Mrs. Mavis Diana Harwood Allton, aged 69 years, who lived in Windmill Road but had a family grave in the Churchyard.

EDITORIAL

December 1st, 1997

Dear Friends,

By the time you receive this magazine we will all be on the countdown to another Christmas although it doesn't seem long since last Christmas.

What a wonderful time Christmas is and how great it would be if the happiness and giving could continue throughout the year. I know, as do you, how commercialised it has become, but beneath all the tinsel and the spending, it is still a joy.

This year we are going to buy a new Christmas Tree (after 36 years), but we still have the baubles which were bought originally and even some which my mother passed down. It is such a thrill to see our grandchildren setting up the tree, helping to put on the trimmings and waiting for the lights. All the money in the world cannot buy seeing their simple pleasure.

We, as Christians, know just how special Christmas is, as we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mary and Joseph knew what it was to be without a roof over their heads when their baby was due; they knew the joy all parents feel when they see their new-born baby. This was, however, not an ordinary Child and Mary and Joseph must have had mixed emotions and wonderment when they had visitors to the stable to kneel and adore their Baby Son. What a task God had set for them, what a privilege to be chosen to nurture and love the Son of God.

So, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, may we all enjoy the very best that Christmas brings and remember it is the birthday of the most special Baby ever born.

May God bless you and bring you lots of happiness this Christmas.

Marie.

*Christmas
Greetings*

TO ALL OUR READERS