

# Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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Ansley Village, Church End

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## DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

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Dear Friends,

Last night when I came in from a meeting our son was watching a programme on how the universe began. Did any of you see it? It was extraordinary, full of mind-boggling facts and ideas, with distance measured in trillions of light-years. Despite the computer wizardry of the programme, and the incredible images from the Hubble space telescope, it is quite beyond our power really to understand or imagine the immense force that began the universe.

It makes you think, I realised just how much space science has moved on since the time I was my son's age! Then we were told that nobody knew how the universe began. Was it a Big Bang or had it always been there—the Steady State theory? Now scientists seem to agree that there was a huge explosion.

People are fond of telling me that science contradicts religion, but every time there is a new discovery I am struck by how accurate the Bible is. We are now told that when the earth began, it was a shapeless mass, and it took billions of years for it to cool and form land and water. What does the book of Genesis tell us? 'The earth was without form, and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.' This is now what scientists seem to think.

It is good to know that we can trust the Bible, the basis of the Christian faith. Of course the story does not stop there. Although the earth was 'without form and void,' we are also told 'the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.' God, who is unimaginably mighty, the one we believe is behind the immense forces of creation, is a God of life and light. In Genesis He goes on to create light, warmth, plants, animals and humans. Out of chaos, he brings order.

The real miracle is that we can know this God, a God whose power we can't imagine. Puny though we are, inhabiting a speck of dust on the edge of one solar system amongst millions in our universe, God cares for us, his creation. He loves us, and he reveals himself to us. A God who is so mighty is also a God who knows our every thought, who cares for us every moment of the day and night.

How can we be sure? Because of Jesus. In some way that we can't really understand, just as we can't understand why the universe began, God loves us so much that he became a human being in the person of Jesus, his Son. This power that created the universe lived on this planet, had friends, ate and drank, laughed and cried with people, taught, healed and finally suffered and died.

Why? Because we need him. We've messed things up. We sin all the time. We don't really love him very much or serve him very well. He came to us, not because we are good, but because we are bad and yet he still loves us. He rose from the dead so that those who believe in him might have eternal life in heaven—life that was there before the universe began.

And that is the meaning, the message and the miracle of Christmas. As it is the last Christmas of the century, a time for reflection, a time of change and of hope for the future, I invite you to share it



with God, to make a fresh start, to put your life in the hands of his mighty love. You are welcome at all our services,

With love and greetings for a joyful celebration of Jesus' birth, and a peaceful new year.

Gill and Geoff,

**SERVICES FOR DECEMBER, Theme for the month: endings and beginnings**

There is one morning service this month at St. John's Hall, Ansley Common on **December 12th at 10.15 a.m., with Carols.**

**At St. Laurence's the services are at 10.30 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.**

December 5—a.m. Family Service for Bible Sunday, led by Pam Stote (training for ordination).

p.m. Traditional Holy Communion.

December 12—a.m. Holy Communion.

p.m. Traditional Evensong.

**December 19—a.m. Jesus' Birthday Party for all ages.**

p.m. Nine Lessons and Carols.

**December 24—Christmas Eve: at St. John's Hall: Christmas**

**Communion at 10.00 p.m.**

**at St. Laurence's: Midnight Communion at 11.30 p.m.**

**Christmas Day: 10.30 a.m. Family Holy Communion.**

**Sunday, December 26—United Service for Ansley and Arley at St. Michael's Church, New Arley at 10.15 a.m.**

**Mid-Week Services**

**At St. John's:** Informal Holy Communion on Tuesday, December 7th at 9.30 a.m., followed by home communions.

**At the Village Church Hall:** Holy Communion by Extension on Tuesday, December 14th at 9.30 a.m. with Carols.

**Regular Events**

Wednesday Fellowship group meets at 10 Nuthurst Crescent on December 1st at 7.30 p.m. and fortnightly.

Monday 6th and every Monday at 7.00 p.m. in the Church Hall: LINKS Children's Club.

Wednesday, December 8th at 2.00 p.m.: Prayer Group meets at the Watts'.

**CHRISTMAS FAIR on Friday, December 3rd at 7.30 p.m. in the Church Hall. Stalls, games, mince pies and carols—come along and join in the fun for all ages! Thanks to the church social committee for their hard work in organising this event.**

**HELP please, for decorating the church for Christmas on Saturday, December 18th.** There were few to help with harvest decoration, so if you can possibly spare an hour to give a hand, we would be relieved!—come from 10.00 a.m. if you want to decorate, come from 11.00 a.m. to help with cleaning up.

The collection for Tear Fund raised £147.43—thank you, and also to Bill Watts in his new capacity as Tear Fund representative for his presentation of Tear Fund's work. Thank you too to Barbara Lowe and Diana Kealey for all their work for Tear Fund over the years. We continue to support Halima, a young Kenyan girl, in her education. She is now halfway through a tailoring course which will enable her to support her widowed mother and family. There is of course no Welfare State in Africa!

#### **FROM THE REGISTERS**

Our love, sympathy and prayers go to those families who are mourning the loss of loved ones:

Rita Forryan, aged 67 of 22 St. John's Road

Wally Sturgess, aged 90 of 18 St. John's Road

Joan Hammond, aged 68 of 7 Croft Mead.

#### **LOOKING AHEAD: IT'S HIS MILLENNIUM!**

Come to church on the 1st January, 2000 at midday when you hear our church bells ringing, as they will all over the country. Afterwards there will be a short service, jointly with our Roman Catholic friends and Father Mike Stack, at St. Laurence's. This will be followed by coffee and refreshments. Join us to celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ—it's HIS Millennium. Start it with Him, and let him guide you through the year.

Rev. Gill Kimber.

#### **CHURCH ARCHITECTURE**

Over 40 people came on a wet, cold evening on the 11th November and had an extremely interesting evening at Church, when Bob Meeson gave his presentation about church archaeology and architecture. He showed us slides of other Churches showing different styles, how to date them and how to look for alterations, almost making the stones talk.

Ansley Church has most of its interior plastered and a lot of the extra is covered with ashlar. The walls are like a sandwich the centre of which will not be revealed easily. There are however some secrets which he was able to expound to us.

The door way from the porch to the nave is Norman, but the stones that form the actual arch have been heavily over restored.

The standard of carving on the capital of the C12 Norman arch is particularly fine for that period.

Bob then went on to look at the South wall of the old part of the Chancel, he was able to tell us that the stone semi-circle towards the top inside, is the remains of a Norman window, but outside there is no sign of it. The wall at some time outside had been rebuilt.

The low side windows are early C14 in dating, but he was very surprised to see two and had not seen two in any other church he had visited. Different arguments as to why there were two were mentioned, i.e. as the common people only received Holy Communion on Easter Day, other times of the year they could watch the Priest offer the Host to God and could feel they had taken part. Another, and Bob's favoured option, was that in those early days processions played an important part in the Church's life and having two windows was a means of timing two processions.

Intriguingly the most important part is outside under the larger C14 window, of that same wall, next to the late C13 doorway where there is an area of thick and thin layers of stone. This pattern is typical of Saxon buildings and this style is also seen in other Churches: King's Bromley for one, and on the estates of Lady Godiva and Leofric Earl of Mercia. This fact puts this part of the Church at Pre-Norman Conquest and almost 150 years earlier than recorded in the History books. Bob classes this bit of stone work as one of the "Treasures" of Ansley Church.

Another being the North Door, We know the door way is Norman and that it was moved when the North Aisle was added. The actual door is very old. The ironwork is Medieval C13-C14 and very precious.

This door though was not made for that door way. There are indentations in the woodwork, which show at least 3 hinges of the same style as those there. It was in fact much bigger. Where did it come from? We may never know.

A final bonus—the evening made £77 for church funds.

M. Antill.

## EDITORIAL

December, 1999

As I sit writing this letter the sky is blue and the sun is shining but it is very, very cold, but there are still leaves on the trees and today I saw a beautiful perfect rose in bloom, and as we think about nature and the seasons as this is the last magazine for 1999, it seems a time to reflect on the 20th Century. Many readers will have lived through momentous events including two World Wars, the first space flight and the emergence of the computer age. However, the three things which to me have been some of the greatest achievements are in the world of medicine—the invention of Penicillin to fight against infection, mass immunisation virtually eradicating such dreadful diseases as Diphtheria, Smallpox, Polio and T.B, and of course our National Health Service, which, despite all its faults, is the envy of the world.

One other invention which has revolutionised our lives is 'Plastic.' Years ago when we took our sandwiches to school or to work we would wrap them in greaseproof paper or in a paper bag and when we had finished we would fold this up neatly and take it home for use the next day. Now we have plastic bags from very small lunch bags to huge wheelie bin bags and do you ever stop to think just how many plastic carrier bags are used each day. Everywhere we go we are given a carrier bag and if we are not careful, especially at this time of the year, we have so many we can hardly distinguish one handle from another. It seems only the older generation now have shopping bags and it is a sight to behold in Supermarkets to see trolleys laden with carrier upon carrier of food. Where do all these plastic bags go to?

As Christmas gets ever nearer I would like to share with you a poem I have written:

"The old year's nearly gone as Christmas draws near; a time for children and all we hold dear.

As stockings are hung and carols so gay, we remember our Lord on that first Christmas day.

His mother and father in stable bare; No cosy bed but hay with oxen they share,

But what did it matter when their Baby was born; a very special baby to herald a new dawn.

It is 2000 years since that special day; many things have happened since that Babe in the hay.

He came to proclaim Good News to the poor. To bring forgiveness to one and all.

So let us remember what Christmas is for. Welcome Him in; don't close the door.

He holds out His hand each one to greet, So let us go forward, our Saviour to meet."

Wishing you a very happy Christmas with health, hope and joy for the future.

Marie Cove.