

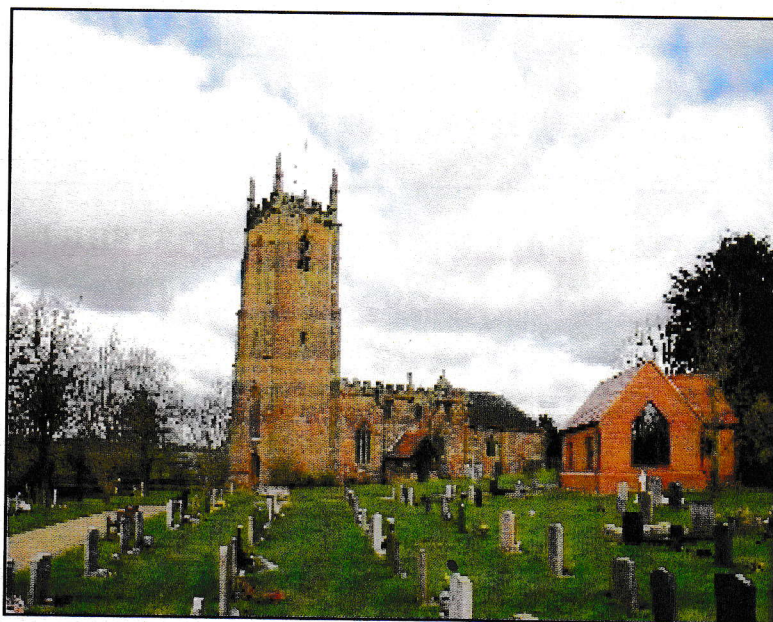
Church of St. Laurence Magazine

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

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Vicar:

REV. PETER ALLAN

Tel: 024 7639 9070

Wardens:

MARGARET ANTILL
MOREEN FREESTONE

Tel: 01827 874520
Tel: 024 7638 1833

St. Johns Leaders

MARIE COVE
JOHN COX

Tel: 024 7639 4114
Tel: 024 7639 4802

Lay Reader:

MANDY WATTS
GWYNETH HICKMAN

Tel: 024 7639 7654
Tel: 024 7639 8901

www.ansleychurch.org

Print Centre 024 7638 6017

"Babies are two a penny"

Ian, my first Vicar, taught me a lot but just sometimes, in order to make his point stronger, he would use rather unfortunate phrases.

In the sermons leading up to Christmas some thirty years ago, Ian thought it really important to emphasise the uniqueness of Jesus. I can still remember the phrase he used, "Babies are two a penny, but Jesus was very special." I am not sure what happened to my expression on hearing that remark but at the end of the service, as I greeted people leaving church, a couple said to me, "I could see from your face that your baby isn't two a penny!" Robin our first child was due in two months. For us he was infinitely special.

Isn't that the point of Christmas? That babies are special - each and every one. If they are not special something has gone horribly wrong. It's because babies are so special that God sent his son to be born as a baby - helpless, dependent and weak but loved and, in the end, that's all that matters.

The Christmas story begins, "In the days of Caesar Augustus..." Caesar Augustus was one of the greatest rulers of all time. His rule was followed by 500 years of Pax Romana - peace and stable government unlike any such period in European history before or since. He gave his name to August.

But Jesus the baby born in a stable at the edge of the empire is infinitely more highly valued. Jesus became recognised as the Christ - the promised one. He gave his name to Christmas.

Throughout the Christmas season we recall the birth of a baby who makes us all special. As we give greater honour to the helpless babe than to the mighty emperor we remind ourselves what is truly important. We don't have to be strong or rich. We are simply called to love and be loved because Jesus loved us even before we were born. Now that is something to celebrate.

HAVE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS,

Your friend and Vicar,

Peter

December St. Laurence's Church Services

Sunday 7 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Morning Service
		6.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 14 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Christingle
		6.30 p.m.	Evensong
Sunday 21 st	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
		6.30 p.m.	Carol Service
Wed 24 th	Christmas Eve	11.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Thurs 25 th	Christmas Day	10.30 a.m.	Family Communion
Sunday 28 th	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
		6.30 p.m.	NO SERVICE

St John's Church Hall Ansley Common Services

Sunday 7 th	Advent 2	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Sunday 14 th	Advent 3	10.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 21 st	Advent 4	10.30 a.m.	Family Service
Wed 24 th	Christmas Eve	9.30 p.m.	Holy Communion
Sunday 28 th	Christmas 1	10.30 a.m.	Joint at St L

From the Registers

No entries this month.

Special Christmas Services

The Christingle service takes place at St Laurence's at 10.30 a.m. on Sunday 14th December. It enables all ages to appreciate the Christmas message.

The Christmas Tree Festival closes with the traditional carol service at 6.30 p.m. on Sunday 21st December.

The following services will be held to celebrate the birth of our Saviour:-

Christmas Eve Communion 24th December 9.30 p.m. at St. John's

Midnight Communion 24th December 11.30 p.m. at St. Laurence's

Christmas Day 25th December Family Communion Celebration 10.30 a.m. at St. Laurence's.

On Sunday 28th December there will be a joint benefice service at 10.30 a.m. in St Laurence's, Ansley.

Nursery Hill Primary School Service at St Laurence's

St Laurence's church will welcome the staff, children and parents from Nursery Hill Primary School for their Christmas service on Friday, 19th December at 9.30 a.m.

Spurgeon Childcare Coffee Evening and Bring and Buy

Thank you to all who attended the coffee evening, brought money collected over the year and swelled the bring and buy. We all enjoyed a good chat over coffee and cakes whilst supporting a charity that continues to do invaluable work with children in our country. A total of £370 was raised, many thanks on behalf of Spurgeon.
Margaret Oliver

St John's Hall Bingo

You are welcome to another Bingo evening at St John's Hall on Monday 1st December at 7.00 p.m. There are lots of Christmas prizes to be won and fun for all.

Concert

On Friday 12th December at 8 p.m. Richard and Jess Arrowsmith will be giving a concert of Christmas and traditional English music among the trees at St Laurence's church. Tickets are £8 available from Pat Arrowsmith 024 7639 2555, refreshments included.

St John's Christmas Social

This will be held on Friday, 12th December in St John's Hall at 7.00 p.m. Tickets are £1.00. It will be an evening of party games and carol singing. You are invited to bring along your own food.

St Laurence's Ninth Christmas Tree Festival - Final Reminders

The trees will arrive on Monday 1st December and will need to be placed in pots and moved into church. Please help with this if you are fit enough for the task! Decorating the trees will be on Wednesday 3rd and Thursday 4th December from 2.00 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Visitors will be welcome during the three weekends before Christmas, from 11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on the Saturdays 6th, 13th and 20th December and from 11.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. on the Sundays 7th, 14th and 21st December. There is an entry charge of £2.00 per person. Accompanied children under 12 have free entry. Proceeds are in aid of church funds and a donation of 12.5% will be divided between Three Spires Tots, Cherish Dementia Holiday Trust and Kate's Ski Tracks, which are three well deserving local charities.

The 'Memory Tree' will be there giving the opportunity to place a star bearing the name of a loved one(s) for £1.00. This money will go towards the cost of cutting the grass which at present is £260 each cut. There is also the opportunity to light a candle, as well as a 'Prayer Tree' where you will be able to peg your own prayer to the tree. Each one will be brought before God either at one of our Christmas services or at a prayer meeting.

If an organisation/group would like to arrange a visit on a week day please contact 01827 874520.

Throughout the weekends there will be tea, coffee, hot chocolate and mince pies available in the annexe and also a raffle for a Christmas cake. Please add your name to the lists for stewarding and/or serving refreshments if you are able to offer an hour or two of your time. Donations of mince pies would be welcomed too!

So why not come along and enjoy the wonder of our Festival, which promises to be another lovely experience and adding to the comments from our Visitor's Book from last year a few are given below; -

- "Wonderful! Thank you, It's really blessed me!"
- "Absolutely Splendid! Thank you all!"
- "I am spellbound. Wonderful. Thank you"

- "A big Wow factor. Makes me feel so warm inside."
- "Out of this world. Thanks a million"

Remembrance Day

This year's service was especially poignant as we remembered the dead and injured of the First World War and those who have suffered from conflicts in the hundred years since 1914. We still await the total that was raised in the box that was in church.

Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Appeal

Members of the congregations of St John's and St Laurence's have sent 21 boxes of small gifts for children of the third world to our local collection centre.

St John's Halloween Pie and Sweet Social

This social event, held at the end of October, provided lots of fun. A sum of £100 was added to Hall funds.

Lost and Found

The churchwardens have reported the finding of a ring in St Laurence's church car park. Please let them know if it may be yours.

Reports on St John's Christmas Fair, St Laurence's Christmas Fayre and the Girls' Brigade Parade will be included in next month's magazine.

Magazine News

After discussions with the PCC, the decision has been made to discontinue the insert "The Sign/Home words." In its place will be an insert chosen from material supplied by Maureen and John Cox, who produce St Wilfrid's and St Michael's magazine in Arley. We are very grateful for their permission to do this and hope our readers will appreciate this format. We will ask for your comments after the first few issues have been printed and circulated.

We wish you all a Happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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

December, 2014

Well, here we are again – December and Christmas on the horizon. I have to admit that I love this time of year. I love to see the shops decked out, the faces of the children as they see the wonders and yes I like wandering around the shops, even if only to browse and not buy a single thing. The only thing I regret is that Christmas is to millions just a big party where a lot of money is spent, when the true party is for the birthday of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

What is a 'murmuration'? Well this is the name for the flocks of Starlings which make wonderful patterns in the sky. When we see the Starlings lined up on the houses opposite us this reminds me of what my mother used to say, to explain why they had all gathered together at a certain time of day. She said they were going home from school. Well, you never know!

There are farmers now who grow field after field of flowers, especially Delphiniums to make confetti from the petals. Confetti has certainly changed in the last few years to when Churchyards were plagued with paper shapes. When we went to a wedding in August I purchased two boxes of confetti made from flower petals. This is not only nicer than paper but more natural and environmentally friendly.

I often wonder why the television doesn't release a C.D. of many of the songs and tunes from advertisements, as I enjoy the music much more than the advertisements. It is the same with some films - there is some lovely music which brings back memories for us of a certain age, even if the films are not so memorable.

However old or young you are, whatever nationality or creed,
Whatever your faith, your hopes and joys, very rich or even poor,
May this Christmas bring you joy, love and happiness galore.

Have a happy and healthy Christmas and the very best for the New Year.

Marie Cove.