



The Reverend Will Adams
Rector Astwell Benefice
Brookdale Whitfield, NN13 5TQ
Tel +44(0)1280 850683
Email:rector@astwellbenefice.co.uk

HELMDON CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

December '06 - February 2007

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THE RECTOR WRITES

Lebanon

Lebanon has been in the news over the past few months and I have to admit that I for one know very little about the country. I thought readers might find the following information I discovered of interest.

With an area of 10,400 sq km, Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East, and is less than half the size of Wales. It is bordered by Syria, Israel and the Mediterranean Sea. The estimated population is 3,880,000 with almost two-thirds of these living in and around the capital, Beirut. Due to its strategic position, the area now known as Lebanon has been a country in crisis for centuries. A small, mountainous country, Lebanon was under French mandate until independence in 1943. Over the years, there have been large influxes of both Palestinians refugees and others. Of the estimated 380,000 Palestinians refugees, some of whom have been in Lebanon for 50 years, 60% live below the official UN poverty line. Mostly confined to refugee camps, they have no rights or political representation, are unable to return home, prohibited from working in over 70 professions, and dependent on diminishing services provided by the UN and other international non-governmental organisations. From 1975-1991, Lebanon suffered a bloody civil war in which regional powers - particularly Israel, Syria and the Palestinian Liberation Organisation - used the country as a battlefield for their own conflicts. Syrian troops moved in shortly after the war started. Israeli troops invaded in 1978 and again in 1982 before pulling back to a self-declared 'security zone' in the south from which they withdrew in May 2000. Syria finally withdrew its troops in April 2005.

Lebanon allows religious freedom and is the only Arab state that is not officially Muslim, even though almost 70% of the population are Muslim, including Shi'a, Sunni, Druze, Isma'elite, Alawite and Nusayri. Emile Lahud has been President since

1998. As is traditional for Lebanon's presidents, he is a Maronite Christian. The Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister are appointed by the President, and the former is a Sunni Muslim and the latter a Shi'a Muslim, as a practical demonstration of the fact that Christians and Muslims can participate equally in government and administration. Elections in 2005, said to be the first ones free of foreign interference, saw an anti-Syrian alliance win control of parliament. For the first time in a decade and a half, the assembly is dominated by members opposed to Syrian influence. Another radical change is that the Cabinet includes a minister from the Hezbollah movement for the first time.

An ancient land, Lebanon is named 75 times in the Bible. That it is a land where the first Christians walked has great significance among today's Lebanese Christians. Around 30% of the population are Christian, with Catholic and Orthodox being the largest groupings. The Anglican Church is tiny, and belongs to the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, which includes Anglicans in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel. Anglican work in Lebanon includes both Arabic and International congregations at All Saints Church, St Luke's Centre for the mentally Disabled, and the Near East School of Theology, all in Beirut.

God bless.

Will Adams, Rector

SPONSOR A CHAIR

We have just invested in new seats in the north and south aisles. To offset the costs of these seats we thought it would be nice to offer people the opportunity to contribute towards them. This would include a brass memorial plaque to remember someone close to you.

The cost per chair including plaque is £100. If you are interested please contact Gerald Holt on 01295 760652.

DIARY DATES

December 06

Mon 4th Prayer group 7:30-8:30pm at The Haven, Syresham
Thur 7th MU Advent service 2pm in Helmdon Church
Sat 9th St Nicholas Fair, Syresham
Sun 10th Ckers 6:30-7:45pm Christmas party
Fri 22nd Words & Music 7:30pm in Helmdon Church

January 07

Mon 8th Prayer group 7:30-8:30pm at The Haven, Syresham
Wed 10th Helmdon PCC meeting 7:30pm
Tues 23rd Benefice Council Meeting 7:30pm
Wed 24th 8pm MothersUnion in Syresham Church (see over)

February 07

Fri 9th Promises/dream Auction 7:30pm in Village Hall Lois Weedon
Tues 20th Pancake Lunch @ The Haven in Syresham
Wed 28th 8pm Mothers Union in Helmdon Church (see over)

FRIENDS OF ST MARY MAGDALENE

Thank you to everyone who supported our most successful Last Night of the Proms event on Saturday 9th September, which was held at Home Farm thanks to the generosity of Gill and John Watson. Some 80 people gathered in the candle-lit, flag bedecked courtyard in front of the old farmhouse for an open air, large screen presentation of the traditional music, singing and flag waving, plus a fish and chips supper and plenty of wine!

Our next event is the old favourite Word and Music for Christmas in the church on Friday 22nd of December; for details please see the publicity nearer the time as various stars have yet to sign their contracts!

Also a note for your new diaries should be the Steel Band Concert that we have booked for Saturday 9th June 2007. More news of our activities will follow shortly.

Roger Miles (Chair of the Friends)



Mother's Union

MOTHERS' UNION

We held our A.G.M. in October during which we looked back through our programme. We enjoyed speakers and outings, meeting people from other branches, our love for our church and prayer. We also work to have a good relationship with children.

If you are interested in joining our meetings do come along. If you would like to become a member please ring Ann Smith, our Branch Leader, on 01295 760684. The programme for the next three months is as follows:

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| Dec 7th | Deanery Advent Service
2pm- Helmdon Church |
| Jan 24th | 'My life as a hospital chaplain'
by Dorothy Micklethwaite
8pm - Syresham Church |
| Feb 28th | A short Communion service followed by a
musical interlude
by Joe and Jill Pitt and a friend.
8pm- Helmdon Church |

All are welcome to attend our meetings.

Jenny Saunders
01295 760721