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HELMDON CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

March - May 2007

The Rector writes

Remember, you were a stranger

Some years ago I did a quick survey of the most common themes on the religious Christmas cards I had received that year. I discovered that the Wise Men figured most prominently. This could be for a number of reasons - use of bright colours, ethnic composition, and variety of settings, stars and so on. In the Christian calendar the season of Epiphany, most commonly associated with the Magi although also marking the baptism of Jesus and the water made into wine, is a commemoration by the church of the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. Epiphany actually falls in January but the story of the Wise Men is often included in the Christmas tableau. I am guilty of doing this too particularly when with young children.

It is interesting to think of the circumstances of the arrival of the Wise Men in Jerusalem. Did they speak the native language? Were they conversant in Hebrew and Aramaic? Did they have enough financial support to pay their way? Were they so exotic that they drew a crowd? Did local people try to drive them away because of their 'foreignness'? Was there any racial tension? Were they accused of draining the resources of the city? (I was intrigued to learn from a BBC Radio 4 programme that it is in part due to extremely wealthy immigrants from Eastern Europe buying expensive property in London that housing prices have risen dramatically.)

These questions could well apply to them, as it does to today's asylum seekers and refugees. Yet God bound his people with rules concerning treatment of foreigners, reminding them that they, too, were once strangers in a foreign land. As they were redeemed from their suffering, so it is incumbent upon us to welcome the stranger. (Deuteronomy 24: 14, 17, 22)

'Tacheback'

Many of you will have read in the last Astwell Benefice Quarterly News (Dec '06 - Feb '07) that I have been growing a moustache to raise funds for the charity Everyman run by The Institute of Cancer Research in support of research into testicular and prostate cancer. I am very grateful to all those who have generously given me money and will be calling upon others shortly to collect sponsor money. I hope to announce how much has been raised in the next Quarterly News.

Wanted for Charity

Coats, scarves, gloves and toiletries wanted for NAASH (Northampton Association for Accommodation for the Single Homeless - Lois Weedon's link charity) and for The Hope Centre (Wappenham's link charity). Please get in touch with me.

Used postage stamps for both the Katharine House Hospice near Banbury and The Shafesbury Society, Radstone's link charity. Please leave in the box in church.

Confirmation

The Brackley Deanery Confirmation Service is to be held on May 14th 2007 and not as previously recorded. I apologise for the error. The service will however take place at St Mary and St Peter's Lois Weedon as announced. Classes will begin on Sunday 25th February 07 from 4 to 5 pm. If you are interested please get in touch with me or any member of the Ministry Team.

Vital Statistics

From Sunday 7th January to 25th February 07 we shall be recording the attendance at all services held across the Astwell Benefice. This is part of a deanery project set up by the diocese to map the pattern of attendance by individuals. Our plan is to be very open about the process and to invite churchgoers to

support the research by recording their own attendance at every service. I am very grateful to folk for being sympathetic to the survey, as the data has proven to be very valuable where it has been collected in other dioceses.

Bumper Attendance

As always, it is a great joy to see so many folk and especially children in church over the Christmas period. The bumper attendances at the Christingle and midnight services would suggest that these are key services which aid folk in their celebration of Christmas and the incarnation.

The Church break in

It was a great pity that one or two individuals broke into the church recently and did the damage they did. The stained glass window behind the Rector's stall is very attractive and now is need of specialist repair. It is especially silly when the church is open during daylight hours and access is readily available - a policy that will continue.

Baptism

It was a great pleasure for me to baptise Charlie Ballantine on Sunday 26th November '06 and Isabel Tims on Sunday 11th February '07. The welcoming of a child into the Christian faith is an event to be greeted with solemnity and great joy. We wish Charlie and Isabel every blessing.

Focus Lunch

Do come and join us on Saturday 24th February 2007 for lunch from 12.30 - 2 pm in the Syresham Chapel Schoolrooms to hear about the work of the Northampton YMCA. This is organised jointly by members of the Wesleyan Reform, Baptist and Anglican churches. Everyone is welcome.

With my belated very best wishes for 2007.

God bless.

Will Adams, Rector

Friends of St Mary Magdalene

We were delighted that so many people supported our Words and Music for Christmas on Friday 22nd of December; the event raised £629 which was a great result for such a wet and bitterly cold night. Next year we must turn up the heating, provide more seats and urge people to come early!

Our 2007 membership appeal is underway, with leaflets having been distributed throughout the village early in February; we will be hosting a Members' Supper in the church on Saturday 3rd of March.

As well as the Steel Band Concert on Saturday 9th June we shall again be offering a Last Night of the Proms event in September (date to be confirmed), at Home Farm, Wappenham Road, thanks to the generosity of Gill and John Watson. We are booking something different for September 2008 so fans of this great night should try not to miss 2007!

Roger Miles (Chair of the Friends)

IMPORTANT DATE	BENEFICE SUPPER
	Wednesday 7th March another supper meeting that is, an evening OPEN TO ALL for friendship and thoughtful discussion of a current issue. This one will be in Wappenham Village Hall, with TINA POKE and JENNY WEBSTER of Banbury Relate, on Why Marry? Why not? Come at 7:15 for 7:30. The price may go up from £3.50. Ask Jean Spendlove (01295 768196) to add your name to the list AS SOON AS POSSIBLE



Mother's Union

Mothers' Union

Astwell MU branch is for the whole benefice and membership is open to everyone who has been baptised and believes in the importance of family life. You don't have to be a mother or even female - we have male members in our branch. 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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| Mar 26th | Lady Day Communion
10:30am at Kings Sutton |
| Mar 28th | 'Memories of a family Doctor'
by Dr Frank Newton
8pm at 12A Church Street. |
| April 25th | Members own prayers hymns, readings etc.
8pm at 12A Church Street. |
| May 12th | Deanery Sponsored Walk followed by Service
Service at 3:30pm in Helmdon Church |
| May 23rd | Visit to Abthorpe to see new frontals.
Time to be arranged. |

Visitors are always welcome to our meetings.

Jenny Saunders
01295 760721

Two more dates

CHRISTIAN AID WEEK

May 13th - 19th

We will need collectors and givers again. Please let Jean Spendlove or Niki Phillips know if you will help.

DO YOU REMEMBER BOB WALLIS?

In March next year he will be exhibiting his paintings in Brackley Library