



As a youngster my family and I had pretty much a private beach on the beautiful north coast of Tasmania in Australia. We would spend many long and wonderful days collecting shells, building castles and exploring in the way that only young children can. These are beautiful memories on unspoiled sands of sunny days free from worry. Of course anybody could have used the beach but most chose not to. There were other beaches around that were nearly as good and most people chose those. Looking back as an adult I understand why. To get to what we considered 'our beach' involved a walk through a long neglected and overgrown cemetery. For us as children this only added to the adventure. My guess is that adults saw the reminders of death and the neglect while thinking of the poisonous snakes and spiders that children haven't yet learned about. Adults may have thought that walking through such a place in a swimming costume with a smile was hardly appropriate. For others the choice for a lesser experience was better than the journey through the place of death.

Now as an adult I see that there are many apparently good reasons to choose the easier option avoiding the walk, the danger, the being reminded of the harsh realities of death. But good reasons are rarely the best. Are you a person who believes the final destination is worth the cost of a difficult journey or do you look for the easy option and way through? The joy of Easter broke first on those who didn't avoid the difficult journey. A small group made their way to the cemetery where Jesus was buried early on Sunday morning. All their hopes and dreams were dashed. These were people who had nothing to look forward to in life. As they watched Jesus die on the Friday it seemed as if there could be no more beauty, no more hope, nothing worthwhile in life and the only thing they could do was care for the body of Jesus in the midst of all that brokenness. Yet they found that Jesus was far from dead. He is gloriously alive and he greets them with words of peace and life. Beyond the place of death they discover the eternal place of unimagined beauty and life. The journey far from being futile was more than worth it.

New life beyond death is the message of Easter. It is the message that says sin, sickness, despair, brokenness and anything else negative never has the last word. Christ has conquered death and is alive. The journey is worth it for the joy and eternal life we receive and share. It is always what lies ahead which matters. I hope your Easter is joyful and blessed with the presence of the living Lord Jesus.

Graham Knott

News from the Middle East

Spring is in full swing and the air is heavy with the scent of orange blossom - it won't be too long before we start taking up the carpets and rugs to enjoy the comfort of the cooler tiles. And then in June we'll be packing for a summer in cooler climes - it'll be so good to be with you all again at St Mary's.

Thank you so much for your prayers over these last months. For April we would very much ask you to pray with us in these areas.

Translation etc.

After Sandy's time in Cairo in February, work will now go on there preparing the revised Kurdish (Sorani dialect) NT for print. Thank God for Skype and good communications; please keep praying that all the details will be covered. If all goes to schedule it should be printed and ready for distribution by September. It's been a long journey, with so many set backs. Thank you so much for your prayers along the way.

From now on Sandy can give more time to working with the team revising the draft Old Testament. We look forward to the day when a Sorani speaker (there are more than 10 million) can read the complete Bible in their mother tongue, and hear *'All that the prophets have spoken. Did not the Christ have to suffer?'* (Luke 24 and Jesus opening up the scriptures to the two men on the Emmaus road.)

In the meantime we are so glad that there are resources and portions of the Bible available in Sorani. We are so grateful for the freedom there is here to access these online and also in print. Please pray for the annual International Bookfair which opens on 2nd April for 10 days, in our city. Pray for the team who will be manning the International Bible Society stall, and for a hunger for the words of eternal life.

Church

We long to see the message of Good News, of Forgiveness and Resurrection Life lived out in the community of believers, so that others will be drawn to Jesus. This continues to be a difficult period in the life of the **Kurdish Language Church** after the resignation of one of the elders. It will be hard meeting this Easter without him. We are deeply concerned and very much value your prayers. Please pray that Christ will be honoured through sincere reconciliation and restored integrity. Please continue to pray for Sandy as he seeks to help resolve issues.

MEDS - a development agency of MECO

Thank you very much for your prayers for the on-going work of MEDS in the community. It has been a difficult time of transition, involving a reduction of nationals working with children who are blind and partially sighted. Esther, who coordinates the MEDS work, will be in UK from mid-April. It would be wonderful if the on-going issues with former office manager could be resolved before she travels. God spoke to him in a dream some months ago and we believe that this situation could draw this man, who once professed faith in Jesus, back to Him.

We are thankful that the work of MEDS has been able to continue even so, including speech therapy (there is only one speech therapist in the whole region of 4 million as far as we know)

Esther, by the way, is a member of the church in Mansfield where Graham and June used to serve....It's great being part of a wide, extended Family.

Happy Easter! With our love and prayers,
Kirsten and Sandy (Members of St Mary's, based in the Middle East.)

A Slice of Community Life

On Sunday 7th March, after the morning Holy Communion service and coffee, 48 of us gathered in the church centre for our 3rd community and simplicity lunch. We had invited Lis Leigh who is Simon Cates' mentor at the Pilsdon community in Dorset to come and share with us what it is like to live there. It was a joy to us to welcome Lis to St. Mary's and she particularly asked us to pass on how much she had enjoyed our morning service and how welcome she felt.

The idea of sharing these lunches was conceived in the lead-up to the Nehemiah course. Community has been close to our hearts ever since Simon went to live at Pilsdon 18 months ago and we began to read some challenging books on community by Jean Vanier, Henri Nouwen, M. Scott Peck and Larry Crabb. Graham okayed the idea and contributed the suggestion of introducing simplicity into the equation. We have heard people bemoan the lack of time to really just chat and share together and get to know one another better and we also believe that food is especially good when shared. Jesus was always eating at people's houses and of course the Last Supper was in the context of a leisurely meal with plenty of time to talk.



After the lunch we went through into the church to hear Lis speak, show a presentation and field questions. Interestingly with the afternoon sun shining directly onto the central screen we had to move over to the side screen and sat on chairs in a more closely gathered group.

Pilsdon has a fascinating history dating back to the 1640's and a very good website at www.pilsdon.org Questions afterwards ranged from how it is financed, what it is like to eat the animals you have cared for and some of the difficulties of living in a community. We were able to give Lis a spontaneous donation of £90.00 to take back for their building project. We will see how God leads us in the next meetings but really our aim is just to enjoy community and simplicity with food! We plan to hold the lunches on the 1st Sunday of the odd months i.e. 2nd May; 4th July; 5th September and 7th November this year. Please feel free to invite friends.

Children and Teenagers: Look carefully at these photos with your thinking caps on. Which one of these do you think will be eaten at Pilsdon and why? Prizes for the most thoughtful written answer and most carefully drawn animal picture to Chris and Ginnie Cates by Sunday 25 April

Ginnie Cates

How should a Christian vote at next months elections?

Modern Britain is a far cry from the world of the New Testament (NT) writers. They lived within a Roman Empire where the vast majority had few, if any, rights, especially children, women, slaves and subject races. The concepts of full suffrage and regular general elections were unknown and so voting was not an issue for the NT writers. On what basis, then, should we vote?



1. *Biblical values.* In summing up the Old Testament Law Jesus said that to love the Lord our God and our neighbours as ourselves are the two great commandments. This principle was fully worked out in the Law which stressed mankind's stewardship of creation (Gen. 1.28-30), the equality of man and woman (Gen. 1.27), the importance of marriage and family life (Gen. 1.28; 2.24) and the community of nations (Gen.10). The worship of God extended to all facets of life and the Law saw no division between the private and the political. Thus, as well as religious ritual, it implemented a primitive welfare system for single parent families and immigrants (e.g. Lev.19.9-10). Moreover, the prophets, most notably Isaiah, preached social justice, condemned corruption in the system, railed against those who acquired wealth at the expense of others, and criticised nations who embarked on massive arms programmes and made war on their neighbours (see e.g. Isaiah 1.16-17; 2.6-9; 3.13-26).

Most British political parties subscribe to some or even many of these values. Conversely, no party will share all of Christianity's values. Nevertheless, careful examination of their political manifestos will help us decide whether they are within the spectrum of Christian voting possibilities. For example, Christians will find it very difficult indeed to justify scripturally voting for nationalist parties such as the BNP, which is based on hatred for non-whites. And we should be aware of the more subtle racism of UKIP, with its anti-European stance, its "civic nationalism" and what it refers to as "uniculturalism" - a sinister concept - where religious practice must be confined to the home.

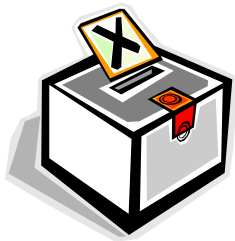
But still we are left with difficult choices. On the one hand, Christians generally support aid to the developing world. The policies of all three mainstream parties are to give 0.7% of GDP (by 2013), as recommended decades ago by the UN, to overseas development. On the other, Christians generally have concerns about the scope of the abortion laws yet none of the mainstream parties has any plans to reform them.

In the end we have to decide for ourselves which party's set of values are closest to (or least far from) those of the Bible especially on those key issues for 2010 Britain where the new government is most likely to achieve real change.

2. *The individual MP or Party Leader.* Consistently leaders in the Bible are praised or condemned for having godly or ungodly values (e.g. 1 Kings 22.41-43; 51-53). Many Christians like to vote on the basis of the integrity of, and the service given by, their local MP. Given the ongoing expenses scandal, this is particularly relevant. Christians and non-Christians alike will be united in their duty to oust any MP whose hands have been in the till who is unwise enough to stand in the next election.

Similarly, many Christians vote on the basis of the quality of the leadership exercised by the Party Leaders who have a natural influence over their Party. However, it's worth bearing in mind that a leader can be replaced without an election (Thatcher, Blair) and that the core beliefs of the Party may prevail over those of any individual.

3. *Prayer.* The need to pray about how we vote may not be as obvious as it seems. Christians are not immune to narrow ways of thinking. The businessman may be more inclined to believe that only an unregulated market can achieve growth and will be suspicious of parties with policies that seek to regulate market excess. Similarly, a public sector worker may be suspicious of parties who seek to restrict public spending through use of tried and tested business practices. We need to pray that each of us votes more objectively and not from selfishness, misunderstanding or prejudice. The idea that my family always votes e.g. Tory in this day and age is surely a cop-out, a failure to think through the issues with a Christian mind.



In the present election there may be no "right" answer. Christians will vote for a variety of different parties. It is together as the British church, not primarily as individuals, that we will influence the election and be both salt and light to our nation.

The general election is but one part of the wider picture both politically and spiritually. There is a need for Christians to be more actively engaged in politics generally and to lobby more effectively on specific issues, to keep Christian values to the fore in our personal lives and most of all to continue to evangelise the nation.

Further reading: The policies of the more major parties can be found at:

<http://www.conservatives.com/Policy.asp>

http://www.labour.org.uk/labour_policies

<http://www.liberal.org.uk/policies/index.htm>

<http://www.greenparty.org.uk/policies.html>

Marcus Jones

A Celebration of Two Lives

Betty Garwood 1915 - 2010

The pew on the right in front of the cross-aisle has been missing one of its regular members for a few months now, but it still is strange without Betty. She is also missed from Mothers' Union, Fellowship Hour, Wednesday lunches and so many other activities in the church. In the 30 years that I have been at St Mary's she was always there. I know that for many members of the church the memories have been far longer.

In speaking to people about Betty in preparation for her funeral I learnt much that I hadn't known previously and other things which I had heard a little about. Before Mothers' Union she had been a member of Young Wives, she had contributed cakes and needlework to sales of work and through her life she had used her considerable skills with the needle to make cloths for the Lord's Table and the cover for the piano in church.

In the time that I have known her she has been a faithful participant in all the activities mentioned above, determined to take every opportunity to meet with her friends, as well as to worship in church as often as she possibly could. During the last months she wasn't able to be with us but, unless she was feeling very ill, she was very happy to receive visitors in the house in which she had lived in since she married, for nearly 70 years. Eventually she had to leave Belgrave Avenue but never quite gave up the hope that she would one day be back there. It wasn't to be and she passed peacefully to be with her Lord on the morning of 8 March. A member of St Mary's whom we are missing already, someone with a quiet but very real faith, a friend to many of us. Our prayers are with Terry and Sylvia, Caroline and Mark, Deborah, Jass, Max and Ben and other family and friends.

When it was her turn to choose the hymn for Wednesday Lunch in recent years, she always picked the old chorus "Count your Blessings". We count ours that we have known Betty.

John Way

Bob Davis 1914 - 2010

I had the privilege of knowing Bob through my sister who is married to Martin, one of Bob's sons,. He never ceased to amaze me.

Each week I would look across the aisle and see if Bob Davis was in Church. During the sharing of the peace in the Holy Communion service, he would look across and wave his slow gentle wave and smile in greeting at me. He rarely missed a weekly service or other events within the Church unless he was ill or, latterly, on an exotic cruise with Phyllis.

I remember going with him to see one of his grandchildren perform in a school play; taking him to the Albert Hall to listen to a prom concert that his eldest son Andrew was conducting and his excellent directions home from London late the same night along a route that was unfamiliar to me. Pretty good for someone who was 92 at the time!

His faith in Jesus shone out in everything he did. He gave a speech at his 90th birthday party and, surrounded by friends and family from all areas of his life, he told everyone of his love for Jesus and how important this had been to him throughout his life.

We will all miss him for the different things he meant to each of us.

Bob had been a member of St Mary's for a long time. I wonder what memories you have?

Thank you God for Bob, for his faith in you and his witness to your love for him.

Debbie Harvey

Bishop's Move

As many of you will have seen from the newspapers The Rt Revd Christopher Foster, the Bishop of Hertford, is to be the next Bishop of Portsmouth. In his role he will lead the ministry of the Church of England in the Portsmouth Diocese after 16 Years in the Diocese of St Albans first as Sub-Dean of St Albans Cathedral and since 2001 as Bishop of Hertford.



Many of us will remember the times Bishop Chris came to St Mary's to preach and more recently for the Licensing of Graham on 24 March 09. He is very much a people person and although he may not remember a name he always remembered a face and he made you feel you had known him for years. We will miss his visits to St Mary's.

There will be a farewell service for Bishop Chris on Sunday 16 May at 4.00pm at the Cathedral and further details will follow. If you wish to contribute to a farewell gift you can do this by placing your gift in a envelope marked "Bishop's gift" and placing it in the offertory plate or hand it into the office.

St Mary's Triathlon Bank Holiday Monday 31st May



Following the success of the first St Mary's Triathlon a number of years ago, we are planning to repeat this very popular event. Please try to keep the date free (Mon 31st May). Full details will be advertised asap. The aim is for the family of St Mary's to have a happy day of sporting activities together. We are also hoping that it will be an opportunity to invite other friends and family to join us. The events (swimming, running and cycling) will cater for all ages and abilities and can be done either individually or in teams. The emphasis is on having fun together, but there will also be the opportunity to compete for prizes for the more competitive participants!



Alison Saunders, Phil Bond and Jane Lovatt



Easter Extravaganza

Well I'm sure that you want to know how well you have all done. This year we have managed to supply both the parish primary schools and the nursery at Field infants. In total 550 chicken and eggs. It has been wonderful to hear about the division of labour some people knitting some doing the beaks and the eyes, some even learning to knit. 6 people from outside the parish have sent in knitted chickens and two came from as far as Scotland. This year a 71 year old knitted the most chickens and a 13 year old knitted the smallest one. The head teachers from both the schools are overwhelmed with the generosity of the church and offer their thanks. I did have a moment when I thought we weren't going to make it this year, but I put that to one side. When God decides he will provide. Thank you St Mary's for you part in the mission of the church to serve the local community with love and practical outpourings. You might be interested to know that three other churches across the country are now following our lead and supplying chickens to their local schools at Easter after reading about what we did last year.



Karen Thompson

Diary for April 2010

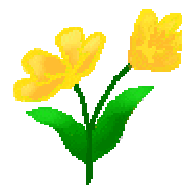
Easter Services

1 April 7.30 pm Maundy Thursday Informal Communion

2 April **Good Friday**

10.00 am Walk of Witness: At the Bandstand

2.00 pm An hour at the Cross



Happy Easter

4 April **Easter Day**

8.00 am Holy Communion

10.30 am Easter Day Family Communion with Baptism. Revd Graham Knott

6.30 pm Easter Praise. Revd Graham Knott

Sunday Services:

11 April 8.00 am Holy Communion
10.30 am Morning Worship Richard Chewter. "Words of challenge" Luke 24:13-35
6.30 pm Evening Worship and Thanksgiving.
Keith Wood. "King of the Jews."
8.00 pm Second Sunday Prayer Meeting. Garston Community Church

18 April 10.30 am Family Service Karen Thompson.
6.30 pm Holy Communion with a celebration of wholeness and healing
Revd Graham Knott. "The end of the beginning"

25 April 8.00 am Holy Communion
10.30 am Morning Worship Revd David Phillips. Isaiah 63:7-14. Luke 24:36-49
6.30 pm Evening Worship Revd Laurie Beard. "Seeing is believing"

Church events:

Monday: Mothers' Union: 12 April. Revd David Phillips. 8.00pm
Choir Practice: 12 April and 26 April. 7.00 pm

Tuesday: House of Prayer (with breakfast) 6.30am. Centre Club 9.30am. Tuesday Group 1.00pm.
Lunchtime concert 1.00pm. 6 April: Easter reflections. 13 April: TBA. 20 April: Soundproof Jazz.
27 April: Eva Doroskowska (piano recital)
Fellowship Hour: 13 April. Revd David Phillips. 27 April Michael Campbell. 2.00pm

Wednesday: Prayer Meeting 7 April 8.00pm in the Church Centre.

Wednesday Lunch: 21 April 12.30 pm

Annual Parochial Church Meeting 21 April 8.00 pm .

Thursday: Mothers' Union. 22 April Revd J Ridgeway. 2.00pm

Friday: Morning coffee 9.45am-12.pm

Saturday: Morning coffee 10.00am-12pm. St Mary's runners 8.30am. (6 Cassiobury Dr)

Home groups are open to all and meet at various times during the week, meeting both in the Church Centre and in people's homes. If you are interested in joining a group or in joining one of the uniformed organisations please contact the church office.

Church Office, St Mary's Church, Church Street, Watford, Hertfordshire, WD18 0EG

Website: www.stmaryswatford.org

The Administrator: Kay Rees 01923 225189 kay@stmaryswatford.org.uk
News Letter Editor: Harry Clark stmarysnewswatford@stmaryswatford.org.uk