

THE PARISH MAGAZINE

January 2021



Mary Slessor
Missionary in West Africa (1848-1915)

**The United Benefice of
St Michael Lichfield, with St John, Wall**

85p

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Reflection

The phrase “so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before.” (Joshua 3: 4) always comes to mind at the beginning of a new year. 2020 now is almost done, over, gone forever. It is been a very eventful and strange year. New words and phrases have become remarkably familiar. The only thing left to do now is to look forward to 2021 and prayerfully anticipate a new set of 365 new opportunities to improve your lot in life and to praise God.

Yet, as we step into a new year, we all realise we have no idea what the year holds. No, we have not passed this way before. And, fortunately or unfortunately, we do not get a practice run or a preview on what is to come.

Sadly, however, for many people, the exciting adventure of entering a new year will be overshadowed by fear. Particularly at this very strange time. Some are fearful of not finding employment; some are afraid of what the GP may say the next time they keep their appointment; and so many others are afraid just for the “sake of being afraid.”

Life teaches us that fear is the enemy of faith, and the response to fear is faith. Fear of the unknown is one of the greatest enemies of successful living and a deterrent to divine blessings. Fear within its own power causes us to forget the words of the Psalmist: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight.” (Proverbs 3: 5).

Biblical history records that Israel had been in the wilderness for 40 years. But they were about to go into a new land — a land where they

had never been. They knew not what the future had hidden in the form of opposition; they knew not what forces were hiding behind the mountains; they couldn't tell how difficult the path through the mountains would be, simply because we have not passed this way before.

Joshua's officers were succinctly saying to the Israelites, you are about to take a journey to where you have never been before. You are about to go down a road that is new to you. You're about to travel through strange territory."

That, in principle, is exactly where you and I stand right now, as we now prepare to embark upon a brand new year. We have no way of knowing what awaits us in 2021. We do not know what gains or losses, joys or sorrows, appointments or disappointments are waiting for us.

Nor do we know whether death, disease, or disaster will come our way this year. We do not know what tests or trials we will face; what new challenges, new opportunities, new ministries, new jobs, new friends, and perhaps new heartaches will come our way.

I am thankful, however, that the instructions given to Joshua and the Israelites by God are applicable for our journey into a new year. Through his word, God has given to all of us some sure, dependable guidelines for traveling in strange territory and doing so victoriously: Follow God!

Just as God was with the Israelites, he is with us today. God can still provide our needs, mend broken homes, fuse broken relationships and open and close doors! God has not grown weaker over the years. His

power has not diminished at all. Rather it is our faith that has become weaker.

At this time of writing we are all hopeful that a vaccine will become available soon and there will be a significant roll out before Easter. I hope and pray that this comes to fruition and is the panacea that ends the situation we find ourselves in and enables us to move forward. Only time will tell.

God said some significant words to Joshua “No one shall be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). Also remember the words to the disciples by Jesus: “and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).

God has not changed. He is as faithful now as he was in the days of Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Peter, James, John. As he was in 2020, so will he be in 2021 and forever more!

Trust God and have a blessed new year.

Every Blessing to you all

Phil

LARGE COPIES of the magazine are available on request



CartoonChurch.com

If you would like to volunteer to help with flower arrangements please contact Christine Higgs 01543 410351(St John's Church),
Diana Baker 01543 253010 (St Michael's Church)

Stepping Down.....

It is quite a few years ago that I took over the editorship of the parish magazine, and in that time, there have been many changes both to the format and the content of the magazine. Judging by the many supportive and appreciative comments made, the changes have been well received. I have endeavoured to develop interesting content and have been supported by many various contributors over the years who have made this possible.

I know many of you look forward to the arrival of the magazine and I believe it is an important part of the Benefice outreach. It is read by a wide audience, both in Lichfield and far beyond. All this has been made possible by the unstinting hard work of Angie, who is an absolute whizz at formatting, and she has made my job so much easier.

We are fortunate to have a new editor from January , as David Shiel has volunteered to take on my mantle. I am certain that he will be an able editor and will be well supported by existing and new contributors , and I am sure that he will continue to improve and enhance the magazine.

David Shiel's e-mail is shielfamily@gmail.com and telephone is 01543 320437.

Many thanks again for all your support.

David Bull

PARISH MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION FOR 2021

The safest way to pay will be the following:

By cheque payable to P.C.C. of St. Michael and St. Mary. The amount for 2021 will be £8.50

Please post to me:
Barbara Homewood
2 Wightman Close
Lichfield
WS14 9RR

Include your address on the back of the cheque , if possible.

Post this to arrive by the end of December. You can post this at the same time as your Christmas cards.

I hope this will avoid anyone having to collect money at your doorstep.

If there is a problem please phone me:
Barbara Homewood Tel: 255909

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Barbara Homewood

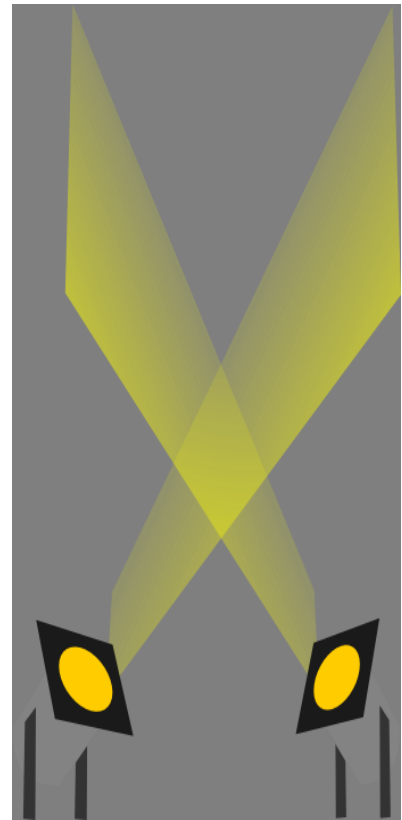
P. S. If you deliver by hand to 2 Wightman Close, our letterbox is now in our garage door

FLOODLIGHTING

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Your donation will brighten up the skies over Lichfield for the night.

**Contact the United Benefice Office on
01543 262211**



The floodlights at

St Michael's

were be lit on

December 14th 2020

in loving memory of

Jean Eastwood

CHAD BLOG

Published: 2nd December 2020

Bishop Michael's Pastoral Letter for December 2020

'Christmas this year will not be like any other we have known': we will all have heard that many times of late. At the time of my writing this, it is not clear what restrictions we will be subject to in December; but it does seem very likely that much of what we are accustomed to will not be possible in the usual way. There are likely to be constraints on family gatherings. Eating and drinking together will be very complicated. Opportunities to sing carols will be much reduced. Many people will be experiencing challenging levels of anxiety, isolation, poverty and mental health issues.

Does all this mean that Christmas will be cancelled this year, or at least dramatically diminished? We only have to reflect for a minute on the meaning of the word 'Christmas' to realise this cannot be true: it is the celebration of Jesus Christ, the 'Great Little One' in whom our God comes to us. As so much of what we have taken for granted is absent or muted this Christmas, perhaps the very heart of our celebration can stand with more clarity in a new light; perhaps we can focus more attentively on the truth which gives meaning to this great story. That is the truth of God's boundless mercy for us, which brings him to share our life as one of us: Sacred infant, all divine, / What a tender love was thine: / Thus to come from highest bliss / Down to such a world as this. The baby born at Bethlehem is not introduced to a comfortable, easy or settled life. From the outset the Holy Family knows the meaning of anxiety, displacement and suffering; remembering that should itself give us hope.

So the heart of Christmas this year will be the same as every year, and indeed it may be easier for us to see what that heart is. The numbers with whom we can meet as family and friends may be few, but Christ will surely make his home among us if we welcome him in. We may not sit down to so many or so exuberant meals, or indulge in

so many cheerful social drinks together; but he still gives us his body and blood as food and drink to strengthen us. We may not be able to belt out our favourite Christmas carols in church as usual, but the song of the angels is not silenced, telling the good news of salvation, and urging us, like they urged the shepherds: 'Do not be afraid'. Knowing that there is so much sadness, darkness and anger around us and within us, perhaps we can recapture this year the meaning of Advent: that our God loves this fallen world, and us his hurting children, so much, that he decides to come as Emmanuel, God with us. The poet and priest R S Thomas imagines that momentous decision like this in his poem The Coming:

And God held in his hand
A small globe. Look he said.
The son looked. Far off,
As through water, he saw
A scorched land of fierce
Colour. The light burned
There; crusted buildings
Cast their shadows: a bright
Serpent, A river
Uncoiled itself, radiant
With slime.
On a bare
Hill a bare tree saddened
The sky. many People
Held out their thin arms
To it, as though waiting
For a vanished April
To return to its crossed
Boughs. The son watched
Them. Let me go there, he said.

*+Michael
Bishop of Lichfield*

Mary Slessor

Missionary to West Africa



Mary with her adopted children

Mary Slessor lived from 2 December 1848 to 13 January 1915. She made her name as a Scottish missionary to Nigeria, where her strong personality won her trust locally and afforded her considerable success in promoting both Christianity and women's rights. Her life is celebrated on a Scottish £10 note issued by Clydesdale Bank.

Mary Slessor was born in [Aberdeen](#), moving to [Dundee](#) at the age of 11 in 1859. Her father was a shoemaker who lost his job due to an addiction to alcohol and eventually found work in Dundee's [jute mills](#). Mary's mother was a strongly religious woman who ensured that Mary attended church and that she kept up her education by attending school on a half time basis, after family circumstances meant Mary also had to start work in the jute mills. By the time she was 14, Mary was a skilled jute worker, now working from 6am to 6pm each day having finished her formal education. While still young, Mary joined a local mission to the poor, working to instill Christian values in [Dundee's](#) deprived areas. There is a famous story of her forcing a group of local youths to attend Sunday School as part of a dare in which she refused to flinch as one of them swung a heavy metal weight close to her face.

In 1876 at the age of 28, Mary applied to be a missionary with the Foreign Mission Board of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. She received training in Scotland before setting sail on the S.S.

Ethiopia on 5 August 1876, arriving in Calabar in south eastern Nigeria just over a month later.

The country she found was in a state of chaos. The colonial power, Britain, had seized control, but was more interested in the maintenance of trade than in the welfare of the Nigerians. The slave trade was still a recent memory in the country, and infanticide and human sacrifice still took place. Women's rights were next to non-existent. And disease was rife: Mary herself suffered from malaria.

Mary's determination steadily won her the respect of the Nigerians she came into contact with. Unlike most missionaries, she lived among those she worked with. She became fluent in the local language, Efik, and developed a deep knowledge of local customs and culture. Eventually the regional Governor offered her Membership of the Itu Court. Mary also adopted a number of local children rejected by their parents: twins were considered at the time in Nigeria to be cursed, and could even be sacrificed as a result.

By the early 1900s Mary was helping vaccinate Nigerians against smallpox. But she was also suffering from increasingly severe bouts of malaria. Her strength declined, to the point where a woman who once embarked on all-night treks through the rain forest had to travel in a hand-cart pushed by an assistant

Mary died on 13 January 1915. She was given a state funeral in Nigeria and in 1953 her grave was visited by Queen Elizabeth. To Nigerians she is simply remembered as *"Mother of All The Peoples"*.

<https://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/usbiography/s/maryslessor.html>

For more information about her life you can visit

<http://maryslessor.org/category/about-mary/>

St. Michael's Churchyard

Last year I applied to The Woodland Trust for 30 free trees for the Churchyard. I am pleased to say that I was successful in my application and the trees were delivered in November. There are 10 each of Silver Birch, Rowan and Wild Cherry. They are bare root trees and are very small. Young trees of this size are called 'Whips.' They have to be planted by the middle of March. They will be planted in open areas of the Churchyard where they will have space to grow. Here is some information about the 3 tree species that we are growing.

Silver Birch

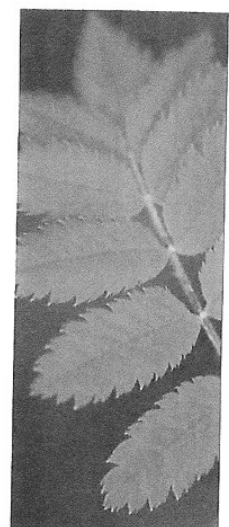
We have a number of mature Silver Birch trees. However, some are quite old now and it is good to have young replacements should any of them need to be felled in the near future. Silver Birch is an elegant, medium-sized deciduous tree. It can reach 30 metres in height when it is mature, forming a light canopy with drooping branches. Leaves are light green, small and triangular-shaped with a toothed edge. They fade to yellow in Autumn.



Silver Birch Leaf

Rowan

We have a small number of Rowan trees so the 10 young ones will enable us to increase our stock. Rowan is also known as Mountain Ash. The tree can grow to 15 metres high and live for up to 200 years. The leaves consist of 5-8 pairs of leaflets, plus one terminal leaflet at the end. Each leaflet is long, oval and toothed. Flowers are really beautiful. They grow in dense clusters, each one bearing 5 creamy-white petals. One of the most striking things about rowan is the berries which grow in lots of scarlet clusters. The seeds are dispersed by birds.



Wild Cherry

This tree is one of the smaller native British trees. In the Spring one of the first signs of life is the white blossom which is like snow and clearly makes the tree stand out. The blossom hangs in heavy clusters.

Leaves are oval and toothed. They are bronze in Spring and in Autumn turn from green to deep red before falling and covering the ground.

The cherries are round and yellow-orange at first before turning to crimson in July. They are edible but often bitter. The trees can seed from the stones after birds have eaten them.



**Wild Cherry Leaves
and Fruits**

We have also obtained 4 Crab Apple trees for the Tree Avenue leading to the Church Door. 2 of the trees are replacements for 2 trees planted last year which unfortunately died, possibly due to the unusual weather we had in the Spring of 2020. The other 2 trees are being planted as safeguards should any other trees die in the near future.

Ray Allen

An Update from the Hawksworth Family in Hong Kong:

Our Hong Kong adventure continued with a trip to Central on the main island. We walked up to the central park, home to the tea museum and a wonderful tea house that serves the best vegetarian dim sum in all of Hong Kong. The interior of the tea house is decorated in a colonial style with teak furniture and wall panels. The clientele are mostly locals with the odd westerner. It's a wonderful way to experience some local food and a large variety of different teas!

As you walk through the park there are lots of pools and a couple of waterfalls. The wildlife is incredible with terrapins and lots of koi carp calling the ponds home.

As you come through the other side of the park, you're 5 minutes' walk from the peak tram. The terminal building is currently under renovation so it was a bit tricky finding the ticket office but there were lots of people around to guide you.

The babies really enjoyed the ride up to the peak. It took about 10 minutes to complete and the tram stopped a couple of times so passengers could take photos of the views over Hong Kong. Once at the top, there were a few restaurants open as well as an ice cream stall. If you have a head for heights, you can go to the very top of the viewing platform and out onto the balcony. It's all made from glass so your view isn't restricted.



Another child-friendly attraction we visited was the Hong Kong wetlands in Tin Shui Wai. We caught the bus from Admiralty and it dropped us outside the front door.



Once inside the gates there was a box hedge maze you can walk around. The babies really enjoyed this. Many of the exhibits and hands-on experiences were closed because of the pandemic, however, we still spent the best part of a day there. There are raised walkways through a mangrove forest, as well as a butterfly centre. They also have a resident alligator called PuiPui. He was enormous.

A couple of weeks later we ventured over to Kowloon to visit the remains of the Walled City. It's relatively easy to find and is now surrounded by a beautiful park with designated Tai Chi areas and climbing frames for the children.

As you walk through the main entrance, the perimeter walls are the original walls, you're greeted with a small-scale model of what the city used to look like. The area used to be under the control of the local Triads as well as drug lords and other gangsters all fighting for control of the city.

Before the government moved in, in 1992, and tore it down, approximately 40,000 people lived in 2.6 hectares. The buildings were tall and often extend-



ed without any proper building regulations.

There are few buildings still standing and it's easy to see just how cramped the living conditions would have been. You can still see the foundations of the South Gate entrance. It's absolutely fascinating and well worth a visit if you get the chance to.

We continue to visit our local beaches, Little Palm beach and Clearwater Bay second beach. The water is much cooler now, but the children have wetsuits which keep them from becoming too chilly if they decide to swim.

We're very much looking forward to Christmas now. As the pandemic has made international travel almost impossible, most westerners are deciding to stay in Hong Kong for Christmas. This has resulted in a shortage of real Christmas trees! We decided, after seeing the highly inflated prices, we'd buy an artificial tree instead. Decorations are fairly easy to come by if you know where to shop. Tinsel seems to be a western thing and many of the shops I visited didn't stock it, however I did find a market stall that had a box of tinsel to one side that I was allowed to rummage through!

We're staying in Hong Kong for Christmas and will be spending the three days with friends. We've been invited to the neighbours for Christmas lunch which we're all looking forward to.

We hope you all manage to have as normal a Christmas as you can. We're certainly missing the Advent services as well as the Christingle service on Christmas Eve.

Stay safe and well and have a wonderful Christmas and New Year.

With love,
The Hawksworths xx

United Nations

International Year of Peace and Trust, 2021

The UN General Assembly has unanimously adopted a resolution initiated by Turkmenistan, declaring the year 2021 as ‘The International Year of Peace and Trust.’

Commentary by Tariq Saeedi

A resolution of the UN General Assembly, on its own, is just an expression of a will or an aspiration. At best, it can point in the right direction and provide a roadmap to go there. It is for the members of the United Nations to match their deeds with the words of the resolution to move toward the intended goal — in this case the world peace being the goal.

It is universally recognized that peace is a joint responsibility of mankind. The keyword here is ‘responsibility.’

As can be seen from the text of the resolution (given later in this report) the entire world community has been asked to mobilize the efforts to promote peace and trust among the nations, and asks all the state and non-state stakeholders to actively engage in the pursuit of peace.

Turkmenistan has strong credentials to serve as a viable proponent of peace. Permanently neutral since 1995, Turkmenistan is the host to the UN Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia (UNRCCA). This unique outpost of the United Nations, established in 2007, is successfully serving the region in dealing with the situations that may have the potential to turn into hot conflicts.

Peace and trust are twin strands; one takes strength from the other. When we talk of trust in the backdrop of this UN resolution, we are speaking of something larger in context than what we understand as ‘confidence building measures.’ In fact, trust is the product of successful confidence building measures.

Peace is capricious. If not taken care of, it can wither away.

Peace is narcissist. It doesn't want to be taken for granted.

With the situation escalating in the Middle East, and active hotspots in South Asia, there is every reason for alarm.

Even though the year 2021 has been declared as the International Year of Peace and Trust, the prudent thing would be to treat every year, every month, every week, every day, as the moment for Peace and Trust.

The real success would be to be able to start the year 2021 with robust peace and universal trust in the world.

Text – UN General Assembly Resolution declaring 2021 as International Year of Peace and Trust

United Nations A/73/L.110, General Assembly Distr.: Limited

3 September 2019

Original: English

19-15078 (E) 050919

1915078

Seventy-third session, Agenda item 15

Culture of peace

International Year of Peace and Trust, 2021

The General Assembly,

- Reaffirming the Charter of the United Nations and its purposes and principles, and especially the commitment to settle disputes through peaceful means and the determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war,
- Recognizing the important role of the United Nations in developing friendly relations among nations,
- Acknowledging that the approach of multilateralism and diplomacy could reinforce the advancement of the three pillars of the United

Nations, namely, sustainable development, peace and security and human rights, which are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, while observing respective mandates and the Charter,

- Recognizing the importance of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, [1] which serve as the universal mandate for the international community, particularly the United Nations system, for the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence that benefits humanity, in particular future generations,
- Recognizing also the urgent need to promote and strengthen preventive diplomacy, inter alia, through multilateralism and political dialogue, and the important role of the United Nations in this regard,
- Acknowledging that peace and trust entail accepting differences and having the ability to listen to, recognize, respect and appreciate others, as well as living in a peaceful and united way,
- Recognizing the role of international, regional and sub-regional organizations, in accordance with their mandates, in the promotion and preservation of peace, Recognizing also that peace not only is the absence of conflict, but also requires a positive, dynamic participatory process where dialogue is encouraged and conflicts are solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation,
- Stressing the importance of preventive diplomacy in supporting the efforts of the United Nations to promote the peaceful settlement of conflicts, in order to preserve peace.

<http://www.newscentralasia.net/2019/09/17/2021-international-year-of-peace-and-trust/>

News from Paul and Sarah Tester and family, working in Lima, Peru with CMS (Church Mission Society)



“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out” – John 1:5

After months of strict lockdown, but still with one of the highest COVID-19 death rates per capita in the world, Peru has been in some dark places this year. As we began writing this, the president had just been impeached in what many here saw as a congress-led coup. After massive protests of thousands marching in the streets and thousands more banging pots from their windows (“cacerolazos”), the interim president stepped down. Sadly, it took the death of two young protestors at the hands of riot police to finally force this change. As we finish writing, we expect a new president to be chosen by congress. There are huge economic, political and public health challenges for the country as we approach 2021.

Latin America as a whole has been one of the continents worst affected by COVID-19 and Paul has been part of CMS's support to people in mission around the region. All of us across the continent have been active in supporting others in many ways and it has been great to see the creativity and compassion at work. Initial responses such as providing food and medicines to those most in need have now generally changed towards supporting those who are struggling with the long-term impacts of the pandemic. From supporting children who have missed a year of their schooling to raising the issues of gender-based violence and much more besides, CMS's people in mission in the region are bringing the light of Christ to many dark situations.

Paul's normal rhythm of ministry has been completely changed this year, with no travel since February. In addition to adapting to doing as much as possible online and supporting the work of others across the region, Paul has been working on developing the way forward for CMS's mission in and from Latin America over the coming years. This has been part of the wider CMS strategic review, known as the Isaiah Project in reference to Isaiah 43:19 and a sense that God is leading us to something new. This has taken a lot of time and effort but is also an exciting chance to seek out God's will and join in with what he is doing.

More locally, Paul has continued in his leadership and discipleship role through our church. It has been exciting to see one of our young adults engaging in online training for global mission through a Latin American mission agency and to see our church exploring how to engage more in the support of mission around the world.

God continues to bring his light through situations that could have seemed so dark.



We know that many of you in the UK are facing tough restrictions on freedoms at the moment and we are praying for you all, wherever you might be reading this. Here in Peru the pandemic situation has greatly improved and the country is slowly easing restrictions. In the middle of November, we were delighted to find that very strict restrictions on children's freedom were relaxed (they had only been allowed out for 30 minutes exercise per day within 500m of their home since March).

There are huge question marks over whether the school year in 2021 (beginning in March) will be able to begin with attendance-based learning. The most likely outcome is that it will begin online, as it has been since March of this year. Surprisingly most Peruvians

have appeared to be content with their children's situation, while in our flat we have found it very challenging and have had to dig deep into our creativity to keep our children healthy. The purchase of a small trampoline has been our latest innovation!

Over the next few months, we do hope to spend some time in the UK. The second wave of the virus in Europe has put that plan on hold for now and travel between much of Latin America and Europe is still complex. In the meantime, we are planning to find a way to spend some time away from our flat early in the New Year so as to see something new after 9 months and counting without having left Lima. We are so looking forward to the light at the end of this particular tunnel!

As I write this, as we head towards Christmas, we remember how Jesus entered our world as the light that the darkness cannot put out. Jesus brought light to so many dark situations during his life on earth and continues to do so through each of us as his followers today. We pray that each one of us will be able to rejoice as, in the midst of much darkness, we all share the light of Jesus.

With love from us all,

Paul, Sarah, Sophia, Emily and Annabelle

Paul is CMS mission development manager for Latin America, and Ruth Bull's nephew.

Epiphany

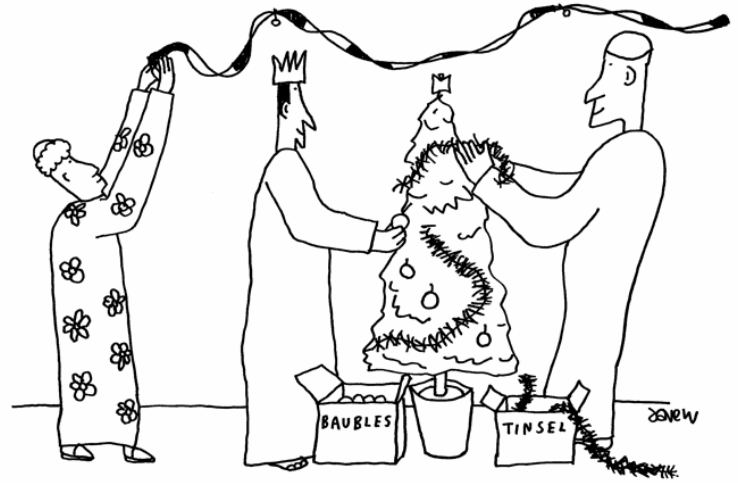
January 6th

Epiphany, also called **Feast of the Epiphany**, **Theophany**, or **Three Kings' Day**, (from Greek *epiphaneia*, "manifestation"), Christian holiday

commemorating the first

manifestation of Jesus Christ to

the Gentiles, represented by the Magi, and the manifestation of his divinity, as it occurred at his baptism in the Jordan River and at his first miracle, at Cana in Galilee. Epiphany is one of the three principal and oldest festival days of the Christian church (the other two are Easter and Christmas). Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Anglicans, and other Western churches observe the feast on January 6, while some Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Epiphany on January 19, since their Christmas Eve falls on January 6.



EPIPHANY: THE WISE MEN /
TAKING DOWN THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS



Adoration of the Magi

Adoration of the Magi, oil on wood by Perugino, c. 1496–98; in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, France.

Photos.com/Jupiterimages

The festival originated in the Eastern church, where it at first included a commemoration of Christ's birth. In Rome, by 354 Christ's birth was being celebrated on December 25, and later in the 4th century the church in Rome began celebrating Epiphany on January 6. In the Western church the festival primarily commemorates the visit by the Magi to the infant Jesus, which is seen as evidence that Christ, the Jewish Messiah, came also for the salvation of Gentiles. In the East it primarily commemorates the baptism of Jesus and celebrates the revelation that the incarnate Christ was both fully God and fully man.



Baptism of Christ, fresco by Fra Angelico, c. 1438–45; in the Museum of San Marco, Florence.

In the West the evening preceding Epiphany is called Twelfth Night. The time between December 25 and January 6 is known as the Twelve Days of Christmas. Epiphany is celebrated with special pastries in many countries, and children often receive small gifts in their shoes in honour of the Magi's gifts to the infant Jesus. The holiday also has a number of traditions involving water as a reflection of Jesus' baptism, including the blessing of houses with holy water.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Epiphany>

WALL NEWS

A normal day in the life of a Verger.

Just before the second Covid 19 shut down I was in St Johns Church, Wall preparing for the service the next day. I like routine before locking the outside vestry door otherwise I end up going back to check I have switched off lights, turned off heaters and locked all doors. One of the last things I do is close the safe door in the vestry and lock it. Sometimes the door has been known to be stubborn so in an instance I put my shoulder to the door and closed it. Ah! I had managed to get the sleeve of my walking jacket pulled into the door and could not open the door with my one hand. I therefore eased myself out of the jacket to discover that my jumper sleeve was also trapped.



I therefore had to ease myself out of the jumper. Luckily, I was wearing a vest. Now I tried to pull the door open from the front with both hands but no joy, the door stayed firmly SHUT. I had no mobile phone on me to ask help from my husband. So, I went home on a very cold, wet day in my vest. My husband did not even notice I was strangely dressed for winter but offered to return and look into the situation. Push and pull, the door would not budge. My mind conjured up all sorts of outcomes to the dilemma.

I was not able to be at the Sunday service the next day so left messages that my clothes were fixed to the safe door. On Monday my curiosity got the better of me so I returned to Church to see if an outcome had been resolved. There was my jacket and jumper hanging on a coat hanger in the vestry. The door of the safe closed and locked as normal. Who had been my **hero**? Conrad Rubisch had answered my call for help and somehow had managed to open the safe door. I must have spoken some strong words of warning to the safe that day as recently the door has been opening and closing without a problem or maybe the hammer taken to it that day had loosened up the hinges!

I often go to church thinking this will not take long and end up much later with another job to do. That return day I noticed a bulb had gone in the ceiling, so I had to call out the rescue team again.

Hilary

Verger at St John's Church, Wall

Deadlines!

For **FEBUARY** Magazine: Deadline is

MONDAY 18th January

Contact David Shiel

Pew Sheet:

every Thursday 7:30am

Contact Parish Office

This Christmas article was originally written for **Local History Magazine** in 2007 but I have updated it slightly.

Some Thoughts on Experiences of Christmas Past.

Trevor James

The second volume of Roy Hattersley's imaginative 'autobiographical' trilogy In That Quiet Earth [Macmillan, 1991] contains a poignant description of a Christmas Eve visit to family graves at the remote but architecturally magnificent Steetley Chapel on the Derbyshire border with Nottinghamshire. Ernest Skinner, supported by his niece Enid Brackenbury, visits the graves of his parents, William and Elizabeth Skinner. They travelled there by bus and they were not alone in arriving to place their wreaths at this remote spot. Hattersley comments that there were young quarrymen, on their way to work, who were paying their respects, but wishing to do so quickly to avoid loss of pay on their shift. The Skinners were buried in adjacent graves because the soil was too shallow and the rock would not permit a double-depth shared grave, which would have been the family's preference, a regular experience in the uplands of Derbyshire.

This may seem a sad introduction to local history and Christmas but this imaginative account is rooted in genuine history and the traditions of that neighbourhood on the edges of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and it reflects a pious seasonal tradition pursued in many places. Pious but it is also a celebration and thanksgiving for memories, which can be seen all over Britain at this time of year. This is the point where local custom and local history meet.

Using a completely different type of source, we can find that John Evelyn the Diarist recorded that in December 1697 he celebrated 'a

great Christmas, open house, much company' at the Evelyn family's estate at Wotton in Surrey. 'I presented my book of Medals etc [Numismata: A Discourse of Medals, Antient and Modern] to divers Noblemen, before I exposed it to sale'. In other words, in modern parlance, this was a 'book launch' and not what we might have expected in stately home at Christmas, although it does actually anticipate the future cultural leadership role of the country house in the next century.

Thomas Turner, the shopkeeper of East Hoathly in Sussex, recorded in his Diary of a Georgian Shopkeeper, his attendance at church on Christmas Day 1758. 'This being Christmas-day, myself and wife at church in the morning. We stopped for the communion; my wife gave 6d but they not asking me I gave nothing. Oh, may we increase in faith and good works, and maintain the good intention that I hope we have this day taken up'. Apart from not understanding how a church collection might have been arranged so that one person donated and an immediate neighbour was not included, there is a paradox in attitude here between Turner's reluctance to contribute and his hopes for the future!

In his Diary between 1870 and 1879 Francis Kilvert tends to emphasise the excitement of New Year rather than Christmas Day itself. This may be a by-product of his priestly commitment to service on Christmas Day itself. His description of the Christmas period 1874-5 is very detailed and it goes on in stages to Candlemas [2 February]. This is a good reminder to us, as we read diaries and documents, because it emphasises to people that, in church terms, the season of Christmas is only fully complete at the feast of Candlemas, which is the celebration of Jesus being presented at the Temple.

In the midst of the Christmas season is Twelfth Night. Exploring Dr Robert Plot's Natural History of Staffordshire [1686] I noticed that he recorded a 'Hobby Horse Dance at Abbot's Bromley which was

performed at New Year and Twelfth-day'. The description is clearly that of what we now know as the Abbot's Bromley Horn Dance but it produces a conundrum. The present-day Horn Dance appears to have strayed from its natural home on St Bartholomew's Day [24 August] to early September, as a result of the calendar change of 1752. How can we explain this apparent contradiction?

Another Christmas phenomenon can be seen in the family history research. A significantly disproportionate number of weddings occurred on Christmas Day. This was true for my great-grandparents, George Henry Martin and Mary Louisa Wills who married on Christmas Day 1886. This was because, for many people, this was the only day of the year when they were not expected to work.

These have been inevitably a miscellany of seeming unconnected examples. However what they do is to remind us that customs and traditions are part of continuing human experience and that we should record and celebrate our local Christmas experiences for future posterity so that they can try to understand, or at least ask questions, about our way of life and values in 2020.



From the Registers

Funerals

25/11/2020	St Michael	Peter McCree	71
09/12/20	St Michael	Muriel Colley	88

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Name of Contact (in case of any problems or queries)	
Telephone Number:	

Please make cheques payable to 'PCC of St Michael and St Mary'

Bible Readings

Sunday 3rd January

Epiphany

[White]

Ephesians 3.1-12

Matthew 2.1-12

Sunday 10th January

Baptism of Christ

[White]

Acts 19.1-7

Mark 1.4-11

Sunday 17th January

Epiphany 2

[White]

Revelations 5.1-10

John 1.43-end

Sunday 24th January

Epiphany 3

[White]

Revelations 19.6-10

John 2.1-11

Sunday 31st January

Candlemas

[White]

Hebrews 2.14-end

Luke 2.22-40

Sunday 7th February

Second Sunday before Lent

[Green]

Colossians 1.15-20

John 1.1-14

Sunday 14th February

Sunday next before Lent

[White]

Acts 19.1-7

Mark 1.4-11





The caption for this photo is
**Remarkable registration plate seen this autumn
 at North Berwick - can anyone do better?**

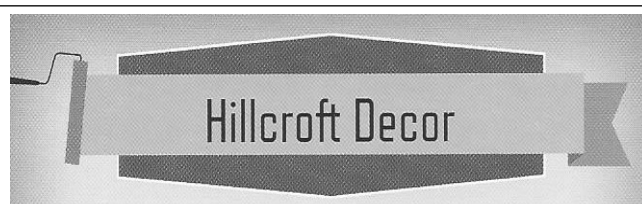
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And Finally

What we do today is more important than what we plan to do in the future.

Jack Hyles

Who's Who

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