



Church Matters

The Parish Magazine of the Strettons : November 2011

Growing together in Faith, Hope & Love; sharing the Good News of Jesus with all.

I KNOW THE TRUTH

Whilst at work in the Co-op one day last month, I saw over twenty people who used to be regular attendees at our churches in past years. Why did they stop coming? Do they even go to church anymore? It's easy to think that it was their choice to leave, that it is something about them that means they no longer want to come. But what if it is the complete opposite? What if they left because of the Church; because of us?

Christians should be different. We are in the world but not of the world. But so often we can end up behaving just the same as everyone else. We bicker, we disagree (not always politely), we fight, we argue. Worst of all we easily fall under the spell of pride. We are right; we know the truth; we are saved. If that is how we sometimes come across to non-Christians or those on the fringes of church, how does that make them feel? Certainly not welcome, that's for sure.

I know I am guilty of all the above. Who knows, maybe my attitudes caused someone to leave church? Am I humble enough to admit my mistakes? Are you? What would God have us do?

With Remembrance Sunday and Christmas just around the corner, there will be a lot of different faces in our churches, many of whom we won't have seen since last year. What will they see when they come through the doors? Will they see a glimpse of the Kingdom, or just a building full of people who think they know better?

Simon Cleaton

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GIVING

Without the widow's mite and the generous giving of so many, it would be impossible to do so many of the exciting activities in which we are now engaged. This includes our children's and youth work to pass on the Good News of Jesus to the generations following, in a culture that is probably more against us than it has been for many generations in this country. So we face challenging times.

In terms of our stewardship, I want to assure everyone that all steps are being taken to cut every unnecessary expenditure, obtain value for money and ensure good and economical working practices by all working together. In particular I want to pay tribute to those who have upgraded our upstairs rooms in the Parish centre at no cost for their own labour and are now planning to give over much of their Christmas holidays to renovating the kitchen to make it fit for purpose as soon as possible. [Please see Christine Hughes or one of the team involved for the details of this]

Envelopes are available at the back of all three churches for those who like to use those. They can also be used for Gift Aid.

Churches and charities have historically received significant amounts via legacies. Why not consider giving a tithe to church,
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and specifically Gospel work in your wills – I can send you to people who may be able to help in this. Many, I know, have tithed what they have received in legacies and that helped considerably with Phase 1 of Building in Faith.

Jenny Mitchell (722663) can help with any stewardship matters, forms etc.

Also a big thankyou to Paul Parsons and John Holden for looking after our accounts. As they need to hand over soon, anyone else with financial skills would be welcome to help us.

May the Lord repay us according to our generosity to Him (Luke 6:38)!

Richard Hill

ALL SOULS' SERVICE

Every year, we invite all those who have been bereaved in the last year or so, plus all others who wish, to attend a service, where they are invited to light a candle in memory of their loved ones. This year that service will be on Sunday Nov. 6th at 6pm, at which Nancy will lead, I will preach and Suzan will lead prayers. All the names of those who have died in the last year will be read out, plus any others who have not been read out before. This service is always much appreciated and all are welcome.

Richard Hill

VALLEY OF HOPE

Its great to be able to welcome back our mission partners, Ralph and Carol Upton, working with the Valley of Hope in Aberdare. Ralph and Carol visited two years back, and touched many hearts as they shared more about the challenging work they do.

The Valley of Hope works with ex-offenders, people struggling with drug abuse or debt and others 'living on the edge' of society. They have helped to provide hope for the future for many. However, the past few months have not been easy for staff, some coping with long-term health problems and with some very difficult new clients. Working with such challenging people, as well as being very trying at times, sometimes brings failures; those who reoffend and are sent back to prison and on one or two occasions clients die. The Valley of Hope really appreciates our prayers and our support.

Ralph and Carol will be visiting on Sunday 27th November. Ralph will preach at the services in St Laurence's that day. At 12:30pm there will be a lunch for anyone who would like to meet Ralph and Carol and to hear more from them afterwards. During the talk, any youngsters who come will have the chance to work on a mural of Church Stretton that will be given

as a gift to Ralph and Carol for the Valley of Hope offices.

We can show our practical support for their clients by bringing toiletries for both men and women for Ralph and Carol to take back with them and distribute at Christmas. A box will be provided in the Parish Centre for donations from mid-November onwards. There will also be a sheet available in church for people to sign up for lunch.

Isabel Carter

GOING DEEPER

Sunday 13th November, 6-7.30pm

The main focus of these evenings is to provide 'time out' from the busyness that surrounds us. This is a chance to pray, together and individually, and there will also be prayer stations set up around the church to aid prayer. Psalm 27:14 tells us to 'wait for Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.' And that is what we're seeking to do. Sometimes I think we make things far too complicated, when all we need do is seek God and he will give us the strategies we need in order to reach those that we are trying to come alongside corporately as a church and in our individual lives. Please contact me for further information.

Suzan Williams

NEWCOMERS' CHEESE AND WINE EVENING

We try our best to record and remember the names of all who join us for Sunday worship. Being human and with so many visitors, we do sometimes forget even people who have been several times, for which we apologise. However, we do want to make folks feel welcome and to this end we are holding a Newcomers' evening with a difference: A cheese and wine evening, offering a taste of local cheeses from Shropshire and the Marches. There will also be pate and fruit, plus fruit juice.

The evening will be on Tuesday November 8th in the Parish Centre at 7:45pm and the aim is for us to get to know one another and meet our leaders at greater length than is possible on a Sunday morning. Surveys done amongst ourselves showed we were good at saying hello to folks when they turn up on a Sunday, but not so good at helping them become part of our church family. To this end a little will be said about a few aspects of parish life so folks can feel welcome into whatever area they would like.

If you have joined any of our three churches for the first time, or want to join properly, please ask Jo in the office, or one of the clergy, for an invitation. Also, as we do have a lot of names but not too many

addresses, please can suggestions of names with addresses where possible be forwarded to the office on 724224.

Invitations will include an RSVP so we know how many to expect, but if you want to help in any way please see Mary Guest or myself.

Richard Hill

THE 'BIG CAROL CHOIR'

The 'BIG CAROL CHOIR' that sang last Christmas at the Carol Service received much enthusiastic praise. If you enjoyed taking part, or would like to join this year, then come along to the Rehearsals that start on Sunday 20th November at 5pm in the Parish Centre. All are welcome. The Carol Service itself will take place on the evening of Sunday 18th December in St Laurence's Church. Do come and help us proclaim the Good News!

Valerie McCalla

CHRISTMAS GARAGE PRAISE

Saturday 10th December 2011
Cardingmill Valley Cafe
7.30PM

Mulled wine, mince pies & carols
by the log fire

Please ensure you bring a torch!!!

www.garagepraise.co.uk

NEWS FROM THE CULLIS- WATSONS

Dear friends at St Laurence's,

In contrast to the summer of 2010 when we were in the UK for three months, this year's UK visit seemed short, with less time to catch-up with family, friends and events at St Laurence. We therefore thought we could write a letter in order to stay in-touch and share something of our lives here in Ethiopia.

A family round-up: Ben is approaching 17 and has started his International Baccalaureate. He seems reasonably focused and is settled with a good group of friends. Since New Wine he is now a regular at St Matthew's youth group, which is well attended. He continues to enjoy sport, playing in the school tennis and volleyball teams and recently taking up ultimate frisbee – a game only the Americans could have invented. In a few weeks he is headed to South Africa for his first international volleyball tournament. Annie at 13 is also settled and happy at school. Not yet old enough to join the youth group (a cut off of 14 years old) she joins us on Sunday morning service which is traditional in style. She also has a good group of friends at school and enjoys tennis on the weekends. Annie is also Charlie's (a puppy she rescued from the street) main trainer.

Cathy is in Dubai, ostensibly facilitating a planning workshop for the Brooke Institute - a specialist equine organization. We inevitably joke the workshop is really about horse racing and shopping. When she returns we will celebrate her 50th birthday before she leaves again to facilitate a livestock keepers training workshop. She is then back again for a short time before heading off to Kenya to evaluate a regional Oxfam programme. It's lovely to see her getting back to her old self after her bout of pneumonia in January. That said, the jogging is still some way off, but we are hopeful by the end of the year she will be fully recovered.

I've been with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) for a year and last month moved from a policy to a coordination role in the Emergencies team. I never imagined working for the UN, but find I enjoy FAO's food and agriculture mandate, in particular, at this time. FAO is currently assisting a range of humanitarians working on medium and longer-term responses to the Horn of Africa crisis as alternatives to food aid, emergency health and nutrition and water trucking. While life-saving interventions are important, they are inevitably short-term and will do nothing to address the region's longer-term challenges. When this drought is over, 80 percent of rural Ethiopians will continue to have to

survive on less than 1 US dollar a day.

This week FAO submitted an *'innovative food security proposal'* to the EU. In the bid, FAO is partnering with Tearfund and will work with some of Tearfund's 6,000 self-help groups wanting to test a range of agriculture improvements. The Tearfund self-help approach is inspired by work done in India over 30 years. With a focus on working with the poorest, some of the groups start saving as little as 2 pence per week. Apparently one group started saving coffee beans at a rate of 1 or 2 per person per week. From this very modest base, some of the first groups formed in 2002 are making loans to group members of up to US\$1,000, with no external financial support. Loans meet family health, education and related needs and finance income generating activities, including agriculture. One of the main lessons learned is that the quality of relationships among the group members plays a pivotal role in how the groups perform. Importantly, a number of groups include Christian and Muslim members, resulting in additional community-relations benefits from the work.

Our hope is that by working together with a Dutch-based specialist agriculture marketing organization, FAO and Tearfund will assist self-help groups in developing better

farming and agriculture marketing approaches and therefore help more groups escape from poverty. In this way, the groups will be better able to withstand drought, food price increases - currently running at 39 percent in Ethiopia - and other hazards associated with day-to-day life in one of the poorest countries of the world. We shall see what, if anything, comes of this initiative, but we are hopeful that if the EU doesn't fund it perhaps another donor will. We know the Horn of Africa will have been in your thoughts and prayers over recent weeks and months. We know too some of you will continue to pray for the region and support agencies working here, as you will be aware it can take anything up to 5 years for drought affected families to rebuild their lives. As a St Laurence mission partner - well, at the time we were in the Strettons - perhaps you could specifically pray for Tearfund's self-help work in Ethiopia, irrespective of whether or not we jointly win the EU grant. Incidentally, I think FAO does some increasingly innovative work - for example we brought the different partners in the proposal together, none of whom had worked together - but more on this another time!

At a family level, the result of changes in government 'council tax' banding means rents are set to rise and, unable to compete with embassy supported rents in our

area, we may have to move. This is unfortunate as we have only been in the house for a year and have invested in installing of a new water system, laying floors, decorating and establishing the garden. We would therefore particularly value your thoughts and prayers as we negotiate either a new lease or find a new home.

We are looking forward to another Pepler visit at some point soon and the opportunity to catch up with news of Apedale, the Strettons and life at St Laurence. Until then be assured you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Adrian (Cathy, Ben and Annie)

STAFF CONTACT DETAILS

| Role | Name | Email | Phone |
|-----------------------|----------------------|--|-----------------|
| Rector | Rev. Richard Hill | richard.hill@strettonparish.org.uk | 722585 |
| Curate | Rev. Suzan Williams | suzan.williams@strettonparish.org.uk | 722588 |
| Associate Minister | Rev. John Hughes | jonhughes@uwclub.net | 722582 |
| Associate Minister | Rev. Nancy Cleaton | nancy.cleaton@tiscali.co.uk | 723387 |
| Children's Worker | Sarah Robinson | sarah.robinson@strettonparish.org.uk | 771248 |
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| Outreach Worker | Sally Cooke | Stlaurenceoutreachworker@hotmail.co.uk | 07583 158949 |
| Churchwarden | Jim Davies | jim.riboo@hotmail.co.uk | 722748 |
| Rector's Secretary/PA | Jo Aze | jo.aze@strettonparish.org.uk | 724224 |
| Verger | Rev. Mervyn Williams | mervyn.williams@strettonparish.org.uk | 724224 |

ALPHA COURSE 2012

We are starting an Alpha Course in January 2012. The Alpha Course is open to anyone interested in discovering what Christianity is all about. Guests come to investigate whether God exists or to find out more about the Christian faith and some have questions they would like to discuss.

Why not book the following dates in your diary - come along - bring a friend (or two) - enjoy a meal - listen to a talk - join a lively discussion.

| | |
|---------------|---|
| January 18th | Who is Jesus? |
| January 25th | Why did Jesus die? |
| February 1st | How can I be sure of my faith? |
| February 8th | Why and how should I read the Bible? |
| February 15th | Why and how should I pray? |
| February 25th | Who is the Holy Spirit? |
| | What does the Holy Spirit do? |
| | How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? |
| March 7th | How does God guide us? |
| March 14th | Does God heal today? |
| March 21st | How and why should I tell others? |
| March 28th | How can I make the most of the rest of my life? |

The February 25th date is at the Ludlow Conference Centre 9.30 - 4.00pm and includes lunch. Application Forms can be obtained from the Parish Office. Further information from Richard (Tel 722585) or John and Christine (Tel 722582)



STREETWARDENS

Many thanks to all who agreed to be Streetwardens. Many had indeed been doing the role for some while which is wonderful!

The only roads we are short for are: High St./Barn Lane/The Square, Brooksbury, Crossways, Village Pointe, Caradoc Drive/The Meadows/Windle Hill/Westfields, Sandford Ave (East) north side, Sandford Ave (East) south side, Oaks Road/Oaks Drive. If anybody can offer to do these roads please tell the office or me.

A list of all names will be placed on the Outreach board in the Parish Centre on a future Sunday. Please check it is correct. All Stretton and Little Stretton have their own arrangements.

An aide-memoir will soon be produced to give a reminder of what a Streetwarden does. Our purpose is to welcome any new people into the road using the pack we hope to produce, or coloured leaflet, maybe a Church Matters and any other appropriate literature. Please report any needs to your home group or pastoral team, and pray for your street.

“Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you” (Rom. 15:7). As our heavenly Father has welcomed us with open arms, let us welcome one another!

Richard Hill

SIDESMEN

On the theme of welcoming one another, we are so grateful for all that our sidesmen do each Sunday to welcome both regulars and newcomers. I have been very impressed with the way folks come so promptly to perform this valued ministry and carry it out so conscientiously. When we started the extra service on Sunday mornings we knew it would be a challenge to double up with everything and there are opportunities for more to be involved in this ministry.

In case people wonder what they are meant to be doing, we have produced some checklists for St. Laurence's. Usually no lifting is needed, especially now with our mobile communion table at St. Laurence's, but wardens and others are present to help anyway – nobody should be deterred because of physical incapacity. A letter of appreciation is going out with the latest checklists, so nobody need feel they might 'do the wrong thing'.

If you would like to be involved or see if you like it, please speak to any of the wardens at any of our churches or to Jo in the office.



CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Saturday 19th Nov 4pm

Have you ever wondered what Christingles are about? Has anyone ever explained the significance or what they represent?

I thought I might just take a few minutes to explain why we take the time, at what is the busiest season of the year (and what in many ways has become more about the presents we give than the free gift each of us has received through Jesus coming to earth as a vulnerable baby) in order that each of us might be able to gain, through grace, the gift of eternal life. Symbolically, the orange represents the earth on which we live and are able to grow the food which we are blessed to be able to eat. The red ribbon around the orange signifies Christ's sacrifice for each one of us as he died on the cross. The candle represents Jesus the light of the world and the four sticks represent the different seasons which bring rain to water the crops that we enjoy too.

The service is also a chance for us to remember those who are less fortunate than ourselves and to try to help in any way we can: whether that be sponsoring a child through a charity, or supporting an organisation that seeks to improve conditions for those living in circumstances where they don't

have access to all the things that let's face it, we often take for granted.

So why not use this approaching Christmas season as an opportunity to give thanks for what we are grateful to be blessed with but also to pass some of that on to others who are less fortunate than ourselves.

Suzan Williams

LEY GARDENS

Communion services have restarted at Ley gardens, for the residents who moved from Windsor Place and others who have moved in afresh. I lead a monthly communion there, assisted by Suzan and Sheila. All three of us have sought to visit everyone who resides there now. The next one will be on Wednesday November 2nd at 10am in the main lounge. All residents are welcome to join us whatever previous church background or even if they have had no previous church background!

Monthly services are held by our clergy and Sheila in all of our homes, Sandford alternately with the Methodists on a fortnightly basis; communions at Mayfair are organised through Churches Together.



Richard Hill

REFLECTIONS ON "BACK TO CHURCH" SUNDAY

Whilst listening to Richard on Sunday 25th September, I thought, 'What am I doing here'? (Apart from playing the guitar!) What does 'Back to Church' Sunday mean to me? Well, to me that phrase implies an attempt by the church to encourage people who used to attend church, but for some reason don't come back to services any more.

St Laurence's is the first traditional church building that I have worshipped in. I have previously been to school halls, classrooms, community centres, homes and even a cinema or just in the open air and have found God in every place. Traditional church buildings to me seem cold, dark and foreboding, unlike Jesus who offers warmth, friendship and a sense of belonging. For me, St Laurence's building phase 1 has greatly improved the interior, but my above perception of the exterior still remains. I, like many other people, still feel more comfortable in the Parish Centre or any of the aforementioned venues, which are less formal and thus seem less foreboding to enter.

I would not know the Lord now if He was only to be found in traditional churches. We need to remember that it is actually the people who need to show the warmth and acceptance offered to us by God, that the building alone cannot. I have lived here for 15

years and have been attending St Laurence's regularly in all that time, yet I am still only just beginning to feel part of this fellowship. How welcoming are we to our own people, let alone to new people? For many people it takes a lot of courage to walk back through a church door, so we need to be ready to welcome and befriend them when they do.

Maybe we shouldn't need a special day like 'Back to Church' Sunday, but to be sure to try and make all sorts of people feel more valued throughout the whole year.

John Callingham

DORRINGTON VACANCY

Nancy Cleaton has met with Bishop Alistair and has offered her services as a Locum Priest in the Dorrington Parish as they currently have no Vicar.

This means Nancy's duties will include: -

- Pastoral offices (baptisms, weddings, funerals etc.)
- Pastoral visiting and support of parishoners
- Being a priestly presence at committee and PCC meetings

Nancy will also sometimes take services in one of the six churches in the parish and so she will doing slightly less here in the Strettons.

She would appreciate your prayers for this exciting new ministry.

NEW KITCHEN UPDATE

Planning by committee always takes a while but does mean a lot of people can contribute their ideas. Planning for our new kitchen began earlier this year and concerns were raised about ensuring the new kitchen would fulfill all legal hygiene requirements. One outcome of this was that a number of people, half of them men, took a food safety course in the summer. All passed, some with distinctions. The Food Safety Team Leader of Shropshire Council taught half the course and this meant that queries about the kitchen and catering in St Laurence's could be discussed directly with him. The plans aim to ensure that food preparation will follow a clear flow. Various plans were considered and quotes (fairly large!) obtained.

Mark Tocknell, our parish centre manager, then offered to lead a team building the new kitchen; something he has done several times before. The initial kitchen planning team then handed over planning to a smaller group to see this through – Mark, Rob Rayner, Mike and Isabel Carter and Liz Hammersley. Mark prepared a detailed plan based on the agreed requirements and priced this for PCC approval. Things are now taking shape. The structure of the kitchen will come from Howdens, Shrewsbury. A gas catering oven, gas boiler for hot water, two under

counter fridges (to allow food to be stored safely when preparing meals) and an additional sink are all included. The central table will remain, as will the dishwasher, warmer and sinks.

The timing of installation has been planned to give minimal disruption. Most of the work will take place between Christmas and early January when there are few bookings. But to allow for this - on the 19th December, the dishwasher (which is being moved) will be disconnected to allow for new plumbing to begin, and the Owen room will be taken out of action to enable the cupboards to be emptied and equipment to be stored. On the 27th December the existing kitchen will be dismantled and installation will begin. The hope is that by the third week of January, everything will be in good working order (but we will be dependent on the inputs of electricians, suppliers and gas installers). The new floor will be the final piece of work and can only be done once everything else is complete - in mid January. The kitchen will therefore be out of action for coffee on the 1st and 8th January. Grants have been requested to help pay for this work and gifts will be appreciated. We now need to start planning to ensure we gain real benefit from the new kitchen – sharing food for fellowship and hospitality.

Isabel Carter

YOUTH@ST. LAURENCE'S

The new Autumn term has seen some changes to our regular meetings.

XZONE in Church Stretton School is now running at a later time to accommodate the new school hours. It's not quite ideal and feels a bit rushed but there is a great atmosphere with the young people we meet and we chat with about various issues to get them thinking. We unfortunately don't get to go into the school canteen because of the new times so will miss some contacts we were making in there. We have been blessed with Suzan now helping and she is already starting to develop relationships with some of the young people.

Prayer Point: Please enable us to manage the reduced time effectively and for God's purposes. Help us to integrate and feel more a part of the school, possibly for more opportunities to open up.

ELEV8 on Friday evenings has been divided into two more appropriate age groups. The young people have taken to this change very well, despite initial reservation, and appear to be enjoying the time we have together.

Prayer Point: That we will continue to attract young people to the two groups and they will take something

positive away with them each week. Also that all the leaders will be enabled and energised each week to spread the Good News of Jesus.

YOUTHZONE on Sunday mornings have been enjoying a lovely treat. Susanna is using her cookery skills to make cakes/cookies for all to enjoy – any further takers to carry on after Christmas will be greatly appreciated! Alan Robinson will be joining our team once a month. This will provide more continuity for the 11-14yr age group, whilst the older ones remain in Church to take more part in the service.

Prayer Point: That Alan will enjoy the teaching and building relationships within the group. The older youth will feel 'brave' enough to take more of an active role within the service they stay in for (3rd Sunday of the month for those that count them!)

General news:

Please look out at the beginning of December for our scrumptious individual Christmas cakes. These are very popular and make wonderful gifts. If you think you may be away then you can pre-book with me.

Also our Youth Christmas Ball will be happening again on 23rd December; this is a permanent topic of conversation at the moment with our young people – they don't want to miss it!

Prayer Points:

1) That there will be a real sense of God's presence at our meetings and the young people will begin a journey of faith.

2) The young people will continue to be enthused about the Christmas Ball and will encourage their friends to come too.

3) For helpers to come forward to help at the Christmas Ball, particularly for stewards and people to help to clear the Church on the Friday afternoon and 'put it back' on the Saturday morning. Also, if anyone feels they can help oversee the catering (food will be very simple) and for servers.

Thanks for all the support with the Youth ministry. Particular thanks to our regular team of babysitters.

Sarah Wildblood

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP ON SUNDAYS

The pattern Jesus established is that whatever we do in the Lord's service, we get one or two others to do with us, so they can have a go and then do it on their own; this is the pattern of discipleship, which the church has lost sight of at times of stagnation. I would therefore like to encourage a culture, which I have established elsewhere before, of folks inviting people to do things with them, eg. be sidesmen, read

lessons, lead intercessions etc. - sharing in the task and then doing it on their own when ready.

Many are frightened by the idea that we are all called to make disciples, but this is a simple way we can all play our part, help people to grow in their faith, fulfil their potential and enable the church to grow!

Currently we need more people for: leading in prayer, sidesmen, crèche, prayer ministry, sound and Powerpoint operators. Any offers of help to the wardens at the daughter churches and to Jo for St. Laurence's, but experience shows the best way to recruit is to invite someone personally to do it with us.

Richard Hill

CAROLS & MINCE PIES

The Pastoral Team is holding a Service of Lessons and Carols for older members of our churches and community on Wednesday 14th December at 3.00 pm in St Laurence's, followed by tea and mince pies in the church.

Please come and celebrate with us and also make the occasion known to any who might be interested.

Contact Nancy (723387) or Sue (722748) for more information, and Carol (722070) if you require transport.

NOVEMBER SERVICES

| St. Laurence's | | | St. Michael's | All Saints' | | | |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| | 8:00am | 9:30am | 11:05am | 6:00pm | 10:30am | 11:00am | 3:00pm |
| 6th Nov | Holy Communion (Common Worship – Order Two) Nancy Cleaton | Holy Communion (Common Worship) Harvest Rector Suzan Williams | All Age Harvest Service All Age Team Robert Rayner | All Souls Service Nancy Cleaton Rector Suzan Williams | Morning Worship Valerie Morris | Holy Communion (Common Worship – Order Two) John Holden | Evening Prayer (BCP) Tim Oakley |
| 13th Nov | Holy Communion (Common Worship – Order Two) Rector | 10am Remembrance Service Suzan Williams Rector | 10am All Age Remembrance Robert Rayner Simon Cleaton | | Holy Communion (Common Worship) Nancy Cleaton | | |
| 20th Nov | Holy Communion (Common Worship – Order Two) John Hughes | Holy Communion (Common Worship) Rector Men's Group | 11:05 Special Rector John Huhes Men's Group | | Morning Worship Suzan Williams | Morning Prayer (BCP) Louise Magowan Robert Rayner | |
| 27th Nov | Holy Communion (Common Worship – Order One) Nancy Cleaton | Morning Worship Rector Ralph Upton | 11:05 Special with Communion Nancy Cleaton Ralph Upton | Communion - Celebrating Wholeness and Healing Suzan Williams Rector | Holy Communion (URC) | Holy Communion (Common Worship - Order Two) Rector | |

November 2011

CHILDREN'S WORK UPDATE

It has been 18 weeks since I took on the role of Children's and Young Families Worker for St Laurence's Church. I am discovering how varied the job is and how taxing it is for my brain to take it all in, especially learning people's names and who people are talking about. I know that this will become easier in time and I am really enjoying the adventure into which God has led me.

I thought that you might like to hear some of the things that I have been involved in so far. At the 'Summerfest' I discovered a new gifting of face painting, kindly guided by Sally Cooke and Stevie Walker, which was a lovely opportunity to get to know the children. I have been to several meetings which include Bible study, Prayer, Kidzone, 3.16, JAM Club, Cogs club, Open the Book and Parents and Toddlers. Regular meetings with Esther Gregory, our Diocesan Youth and Children's Worker, has been such an amazing support to me. In my opinion she is gifted in every way needed for her job; most importantly she really loves and cares for our children and youth. Did you spot her in the crowd in the Zacchaeus Sketch in our Scratch service in August? Esther also led an excellent Safeguarding workshop for us. I was much impressed with the resources provided at the Bishop Mascall Centre which she directs. Claire Tocknell and I visited it together and were thrilled to find that they resource all the 'Godly Play'

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equipment which Claire is trained to use with children. Following this, Claire taught 'The story of Creation' and 'The Parable of the lost sheep' at 3.16 using the 'Godly Play' resources we were amazed at how it touched the children in such a deep and powerful way. I am so impressed with this style of teaching.

The American Choir who came were a joy and privilege to meet and look after. Following this we had the Bible Exhibition which involved the infants from Church Stretton Primary School coming to visit the church and having some fast moving activities and presentations provided for them: a film clip about the King James Bible, dressing up as Bible characters, story telling, a quiz, writing in Latin and sequencing the Old Testament. We sang Ishmael's song, 'My God shall supply all my needs, 'cos it says so in the Bible', accompanied by the guitar to finish. I really think they enjoyed it and we plan to put on similar events in the future so that the children become comfortable with the Church building and with us.

The 'Fun Day' at Russell's Meadow was fun for us all. The children made balloon faces and, again, I met some lovely children and their parents. The Leavers' service completed the term and it was moving to see so many children and families in church; how special they are. It made me wonder what we, as a church, can provide for them which would fit into their busy lives to bring them support and fulfilment.

November 2011

Sunday morning 'Kidzone', Tuesday morning Leadership meetings, 3.16, Thursday morning Parents and Toddlers, Friday evening Youth Group are my regular weekly commitments at present. They are all special times which I enjoy because I feel we are truly about God's business. Please could you make time to pray for the children, young families and me, especially on Thursday morning's when Suzan, our Curate, and I meet so many at Parents and Toddlers.

We have at last chosen and ordered curtain and cushion fabric to complete the decorating and reorganising of the upstairs room. Mark Tocknell, the Parish Centre manager, has been so hardworking and considerate of all ages within the Church whilst making decisions about where to put things and choice of design and colour. I would like to express how grateful I am for all his kindness and patience. We are aiming to buy an overhead projector which would be useful for everyone using the room. I hope to encourage the children to make and sell cakes in order for them to feel involved and realise the effort it takes to provide equipment they will have the privilege of using. We will also purchase some colourful round tables which are being kindly financed by Parents and Toddlers. I hope to mount a Bible Timeline at some point which will be useful for all ages to refer to!

Exciting times are ahead as Suzan and I meet up with young families, as

we arrange our 'Angels and Superheroes' party in the Parish Centre from 4-6pm on October 31st (Please see me if you can help in any way!) and our 'Christingle' service on November 19th at 4pm in St Laurence's Church. This term 3.16 and JAM clubs are underway with Suzan and Ro Woolgar leading JAM and Claire Tocknell and I leading 3.16. Both are going well and we are thrilled that some have returned after a short break. The Leadership are currently exploring the 'Growing Leaders Course' as you probably know it's drawing us closer together, both personally and spiritually, which God must be very pleased about. We are appreciating one another's different gifting which feels great!

Thanks to all who are involved in the Childrens work, especially to those who have remained faithful for a number of years. I was reminded last night by a Christian puppeteer that the more effort we put into making our communication exciting for children, the more likely that they will remember it. I am about to purchase a funny and lovable puppet as a consequence!!

I can't really finish this article without saying a special thank you to Sarah and John Wildblood who have been so kind and given me so much time to help me settle into my new role.

Sarah Robinson



PRISONS WEEK

20th-26th November 2011

Why will we at St.Laurence's begin our Prisons week a week later than the dates above? For two reasons. First, Sunday 20 November has been designated 'Persecuted Church Sunday'. Second, on the following Sunday Ralph Upton, of the Church Army and leader of the Valley of Hope project in South Wales, will be our preacher, and ex-prisoners feature prominently among the needy whom they serve. So our Prisons Week leaflets, with prayers for seven days, will be available for those interested on the Sunday after National Prisons Week ends.

Prison Fellowship has recently moved its headquarters from Essex into London, so that its leadership can be nearer to the national levers of power, for PF has set itself ambitious targets of influencing public opinion and of establishing a PF group wherever there is a prison.

Shrewsbury's PF group was formed twenty years ago to pray for the inmates of the local prison; we also organise the distribution of Christmas gifts to prisoners' children through the Angel Tree project. Completed application forms are now coming in; when these have been checked, suitable gifts will be purchased and wrapped, each with a card

containing a personal message written by the child's father – and a small Christian book where this has been requested. The gifts will be delivered to homes by our PF members or sent by post to the more distant addresses.

As last year, our offer to help the PF group linked to HMP Dovegate (near Uttoxeter) has been welcomed. The reasons for this are: Dovegate is a much larger prison than Shrewsbury, many of the men who used to be sent from local courts to Shrewsbury now go to Dovegate, and because of the change in Shrewsbury's intake in 2010 we have fewer applications than we used to receive. We are expecting to send gifts to about 100 children. Our church's annual donation helps greatly in meeting this expense.

Andrew Mercer and I (both volunteer chaplains at the prison) are very aware of the change in the prison since it ceased to be a local prison and became one for 'vulnerable prisoners'. There are more older men, they stay longer and there are therefore fewer new arrivals. More significantly, the great majority are sex offenders, many of them 'in denial' – 'I was set up' or 'What happened was consensual' – and it is more difficult to hold meaningful conversations.

The change was a blow to 'Fresh Start, New Beginnings', a

Chaplaincy initiative to provide a mentor for Shropshire prisoners on their discharge. Since only a small number now come from the county, 'Fresh Start' is building links with other local prisons and their Shropshire inmates.

'S.O.R.I.', the Restorative Justice course, is less suitable for sex offenders, so Rev. David Farley, the Chaplaincy Manager, is making preparations to set up 'Circles of Support', a scheme that surrounds discharged sex offenders with a 'circle' or group to provide ongoing support. David will be explaining how this will work at our Prisons Week meeting on Monday, 28th November.

Please pray for our prisoners and their families, for Prison fellowship and the Chaplaincy (highly praised after a recent inspection), and for the Angel Tree project.

Douglas Grounds

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY

Remembrance Sunday is on Sunday November 13th. As usual there will be a traditional service in St. Laurence's at 10am, followed by a short act of remembrance with 2 minutes' silence at the War memorial at 11am. The British Legion and other uniformed organisations will be taking part.

There will also be an All Age service in the Parish centre, led by Robert

Rayner and Simon Cleaton also at 10am.

Coffee will follow both services in the Parish Centre after the 2 mins. silence.

Armistice Day itself is on the 11th with the act of remembrance at 11am at the War Memorial. As it is the 11th year of this century, it is anticipated that many may make a special effort to be present at 11am on the 11/11/11.

Richard Hill

PERSECUTED CHURCH

20th November

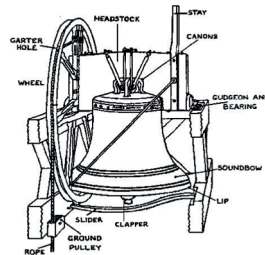
Did you know that 1 in every 8 Christians around the world face persecution, harassment and violence because of their faith in Jesus? The rising tide of secularism is now threatening to engulf Western Society and Christians in the West are beginning to suffer increasing ridicule, discrimination and marginalisation. Even in our own country, persecution is gaining ground and employees are suspended for wearing a cross, doctors reprimanded for sharing their faith, school assistants and nurses suspended for offering to pray with someone, B & B owners fined for refusing gay couples a double bedded room and cafe proprietors told to remove Christian posters from their walls to prevent offence.

But the trials most of us face are nothing compared to the sort of persecution being experienced by many Christians throughout the world. Violent extremism is gaining ground, particularly amongst Muslim and Hindu extremists, often supported by government sponsored action. Hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled their homes in fear. Whole villages are attacked, killing the Christian inhabitants who do not manage to escape. The attackers set fire to the houses and churches, or plant landmines around the structures and bodies to kill anyone who tries to return. Christians throughout the world are threatened, kidnapped, tortured or murdered because of their faith. "When will they come to kill us Daddy?" asked the children of an Egyptian Christian Leader.

Yet remarkably, in the midst of acute persecution, many of the churches under persecution are growing and are renowned for their joy. How is this possible? How can Christians who endure such appalling suffering at the hands of others, respond in this way? The answer surely lies in knowing that God is with us. His grace and strength help us face our trials, so that with the Psalmist we can say, "I will fear no evil, for you are with me."

This is all the background to the services at 9.30a.m. and 11.05a.m. being led by the Men's Group on www.strettonparish.org.uk

20th November. Do come and hear the stories and the hope of the persecuted church.



THE BELLS

On Tuesday 15th November 2011 Church Stretton Tower are celebrating the 300th birthday of part of our ring of bells – an arbitrary date – the nearest practice night to 17/11.

The world in 1711 was a very different place to today, although there was a Queen on the throne. Bells then would have been much more easily heard – no traffic noise to drown their sound. Imagine the excitement as the new ring of six were received by horse and cart (they were cast by Abraham Ruddell of Gloucester), were winched up the tower, blessed and set to work. They were not the first bells in Church Stretton – there had been a ring of five and a santus before (1553). I do not know whether Henry VIII's reformation or Cromwell's zeal did for them; perhaps they just sounded too medieval! Either way, once again

the bells would have been able to mark services, welcome brides, lay the dead to rest, and warn of danger, largely as they do today.

300 years ago, Change Ringing, as we call our current style, was in its infancy, so what type of sound the ringers would have made we can only conjecture; maybe rounds and calls? What we do know is that it would have been much the same as now, a constant in an ever changing world. The tower has developed of course; there were an additional two bells and some recasting in 1890 (dedicated 6th February 1891), an Ellacombe Chiming Apparatus, and women. Many ringers are now female and it is no longer the done thing to become drunk in the tower! Weddings are paid in cash not alcohol!

Anyone interested in seeing what we do up the tower, or in having a go, please come to one of our practices on a Tuesday evening or give me a call. Or why not come on 15th November and help us celebrate our 300th birthday, starting at 6:45pm with a few prayers.

P.S. Does anyone know of the existence of a photograph of the augmentation 1890? Does anyone have any pictures of ringers past which I could copy as part of the Tower record?

TERESA OF AVILA – A 'FEISTY SAINT'

Teresa was born in Spain in the 16th Century and seems to me to be one of the most 'human' of the 'Saints'. She lived during a particularly difficult period of the Spanish State and Church and her decision to become a nun was moved more by fear of hell than love of God. She was an independent theological thinker but she continually struggled with prayer and her own motivations. Above all, she was not afraid to tell God what she thought of him – good or bad!

On one occasion when the coach she was travelling in lost a wheel and dispatched its passengers into the mud she is purported to have remarked: 'I'm not surprised you don't have many friends, Lord, when this is how you treat them!'

She was ashamed at the reputation for holiness which she acquired because she knew there was a vast difference between the reputation and the reality. She realised how easy it was to deceive herself and others about the state of her inner life.

For eighteen years she struggled with this, dismayed by the relative ease with which she sustained her reputation as a good nun. Outwardly she gave the impression

Anne Hone

of being very devout; inside she was a spiritual mess.

However, she encouraged perseverance in prayer. From very early in her life as a nun she began to have religious or mystical experiences which often left her feeling baffled and confused. She saw prayer as active, involving reading and thinking. But even in her most spiritual moments she knew that she would return to a life of 'self-pleasing' and was aware of a continuing need for direction.

The Incarnation is at the heart of Teresa's spirituality and she wrote about how the incarnate Christ could be communicated to the world through the lives of Christians at a time when God seemed to have few friends and when the church authorities were not over eager to help people grow in the friendship of God.

Another striking theme of her spirituality is 'Friendship with Christ'. In this we see her own desire to be needed, welcomed and loved as a friend.

Teresa was not a feminist but in her spirituality we see Jesus' accessibility to women. For Teresa the friendship of Jesus cuts across any narrow or rigid account of women's spiritual or intellectual capabilities. In response to Paul's teaching on women 'being silent in

the church' she said 'Tell them they shouldn't follow just one part of scripture.' What a very 'modern' approach!

Teresa wrote many beautiful prayers, some of which we still use today but one of my favourites is this one which she wrote on 'Growing Older'

Lord, Thou knowest better than I myself that I am growing older and will someday be old.

Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion.

Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy.

With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all; but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point.

Seal my lips on my aches and pains; they are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cock-sureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

November 2011

Keep me reasonably sweet, for a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people; and give, O Lord, the grace to tell them so. Amen.

Amen indeed!!

Nancy Cleaton

FUNERALS

The following funerals took place during the last month:

Ron Bennett
Curt Ridgley
Denise Hedley

We hold their families and friends in our prayers.

BAPTISM ANNIVERSARIES

There are no anniversaries in November.



MEMORIAL BOOK

In October we gave thanks for lives of:

| | |
|---------------------|------------|
| Cyril Evans | 5/10/1985 |
| George Jennings | 5/10/2006 |
| Kenneth Wheale | 6/10/1992 |
| Gwenneth Williamson | 6/10/2005 |
| Charles Cattermole | 10/10/2001 |
| Sylvia Bentley | 11/10/1995 |
| Henry (Ted) Hallam | 17/10/1989 |
| Linda Riley | 20/10/1999 |
| Anne Murton | 20/10/2000 |
| Barry Soden | 22/10/1999 |
| George Williamson | 23/10/1998 |
| Lilly Powell | 28/10/1991 |
| Edith Tanner | 29/10/1992 |
| Percy Illsley | 30/10/1985 |
| David Parker | 31/10/1995 |

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Deadline:

The deadline for submissions for the next edition of Church Matters is **Sunday 20th Nov.** If possible, can all articles be emailed to simon.cleaton@talk21.com preferably in the form of **unformatted** Word Documents. Alternatively, drop them in to the Parish Office as hard copies.

Please note:

The editor reserves the right to amend, curtail or expand, and to select appropriate headings and subsidiary headings, for all articles submitted for inclusion in Church Matters.



DATES OF INTEREST FOR NOVEMBER

| Date | Time | Event | Location |
|------|---------|---|----------------------------|
| 3rd | 7:45pm | HR Committee | Owen Room |
| 5th | 7:45pm | Sylvester Horne Reopening night Concert | Sylvester Horne Institute |
| 8th | 7:45pm | Newcomers Wine and Cheese Evening | Parish Centre |
| 11th | 11:00am | Short act of remembrance | War memorial |
| 13th | 10:00am | Remembrance Day Service | St. Laurence's |
| 13th | 6:00pm | Going Deeper | St. Laurence's |
| 15th | 6:45pm | 300th Anniversary of the Bells | Bell Tower |
| 19th | All Day | 'Hungry for God' Conference | Christ Church Bayston Hill |
| 24th | 7:30pm | PCC Meeting | Parish Centre |
| 29th | 2:00pm | All Saints Committee meeting | All Saints |

Also on in November :

- Church Prayer meeting every Wednesday, 7:30pm Owen Room
- Holy Communion every Thursday, 11:30am at St. Laurence's
- Parents and Toddlers every Thursday, 10:00am, St. Laurence's
- Worship Choir every Wednesday, 7:30pm, Parish Centre

The weekly diary is viewable in Contact and please remember that details of all recurring events are also on the church website at www.strettonparish.org.uk.

