



# Church Matters

The Parish Magazine of the Strettons : January 2012

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

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## ANOTHER NEW YEAR

As another new year slides into view with unswerving regularity, some people will see it as an opportunity to make a new start. Now, I don't hold with New Year's resolutions, mainly because they are almost impossible to keep, and that is if the person making them even really intends to keep them in the first place. Also, people seem to see New Year's resolutions as an excuse not to make changes at any other time of the year.

As Christians we are called to make many changes to the way we live our lives, and not just at New Year. Our God is a 24/7, 365 days a year God, who asks that we turn our lives around and follow Him, not the world with all its transient glitter and sparkle and its hollow, empty promises.

Though, as humans, we are ever-changing, and not always for the better, our God is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be tomorrow, and that gives us something very solid to hold onto.

Our world will no doubt go through many changes this coming year and many, many people will endeavour to change aspects of their lives, be it

through New Year's resolutions, conscious choice or circumstances beyond their control. But, as Christians, let us not change our lives for the sake of change alone or because it seems like a good idea. Let us change our lives to more fully reflect the love and peace of Jesus, a love and peace that this world surely needs. If we do that then maybe, just maybe, other people will resolve to change their lives too; not because it is New Year but because they are seeking a New Life.

**Simon Cleaton**

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## **KINGDOM COME 2012 YEAR OF PRAYER**

Many observers have commented that the English are the worst people in the world for prayer! We talk till the cows come home but as soon as a prayer time is announced, few will be around! So after other parts of the British Isles have had special prayer initiatives, 2012 is the turn of the English and many leaders of various prayer movements will be supporting ways of encouraging prayer this year.

Why don't we pray? When I ask this, the usual answer is to criticise someone else or the prayer meeting. Maybe it is our condemning attitude that is getting in the way and making the meeting dull! If we are enjoying intimacy with God, how can that be boring? Jesus was the most interesting person that ever lived. If spending time with Him is dull maybe we are not getting through, which may mean we need to look at ourselves! Is there anything we need to repent of, any wrong attitude, any ungodly link with anybody, etc.? If we are grieving the Holy Spirit in some way, we can prevent God from being close to us.

Having cleared obstacles out of the way, let us claim our birthright as children of God, which is that we should be led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:26). Yes, it is hard for all of us to get started at times, but once we allow God to direct our thoughts to lead us to a promise of Scripture to claim, to a song to sing as praise, we shall begin to find a significant conversation developing. If God has disappointed us in some

way, ask Him why. Sometimes He does ask us to hold on in faith, so that we walk by faith and not by sight. Sometimes we are tested so we are refined and made more like Jesus. Sometimes He breaks us to learn to rely on Him and not ourselves – we are called to take up our cross daily, a daily death experience! A by-product of that is to learn compassion and to be turned out from being self-focused to being God-focused!

Sometimes we may feel prayer makes no difference. Some promises speak of 'going on asking', 'going on seeking', 'going on knocking', we have to be persistent, and if an answer is not forthcoming, let us enter into a conversation with God about it – maybe He wants to teach us something first; maybe there is an obstacle to pray out of the way. There is a mystery that God's plans are affected by our prayers, yet He is sovereign and He lets all people have free will – how it all comes together I don't know, but I know from Scripture and experience that all these happen together! Besides, Jesus tells us to pray and hopes His followers will. At every significant point in Acts, it says something like "and they prayed". Every revival in history has been preceded by urgent believing prayer.

So what our society most needs today is a praying church!

May we in this New Year resolve to seek God with all our heart and see if He does not draw near to us to perform wonders in us and through us!

**Richard Hill**

## MISSION ACTION PLANS

Hereford Diocese is encouraging all churches to undertake a Mission Action Plan (MAP). This is basically a tool to assess where we currently are, celebrate the good things that are happening, prayerfully explore where we think God wants us to be in the future, and then devise a plan to enable some of those things to begin to happen over the next five years. Despite the title, it is not just about mission and evangelism. Rather, it is about seeking to align ourselves with God's overall plan for His people in the Strettons.

Revd. Caroline Pascoe introduced Mission Action Planning to people at the Deanery meeting in November. The Diocese has chosen to use the Five Marks of Mission to structure the MAPs. You may have studied the Five Marks in the 2011 Lent Course that Bishop Alistair wrote.

The Rector has asked me to help the Parish begin the MAPing process. I cherish the fact that we have three lovely and unique Churches in our Parish, whose congregations, although of different sizes and characters, are all equally important. I want to celebrate and reflect this by encouraging each of the three Churches to create their own Mission Action Plan. You are the experts on your Church and what God is doing there, but I will

be available to help guide everyone through the MAPing process. Eventually the three MAPs will be included in a Parish MAP which will be sent to the Diocese in the summer.

The first stage is to assess where we currently are and what we are already doing in our three churches. I would greatly value your help with this. I have produced a form for you to use to tell me about what you are involved with. These forms have already been given to Janet Poundford for distribution at All Saints Church. People at St Laurence's will be given forms at the start of January. After that, I will discuss the subject of MAPing with St Michael's Church at an appropriate time, as the situation is a little more complex there, being a joint Anglican/URC church.

I would be very much appreciated if you could use the forms to record all current 'activity' you are involved with, e.g. Church services, pastoral care, prayer meetings, home groups, care of the church building, outreach events, or other ministries and activities carried out by you as an individual or within a group. Information and ideas are welcome from all. Forms can be returned to me, to the Parish Office, or to Janet Poundford (for All Saints).

Do contact me if you have any questions. Thank you.

**Sally Cooke**

January 2012

## ALPHA STARTS IN JANUARY

- Want to know more about the Christian faith?
- Brush up on the basics?
- Have a refresher on what we believe?
- Have never been on an Alpha before (or it was a long time ago!)
- Are you a newcomer to the parish?
- 

Why not come to Alpha? Try it and see if it is for you. We start on Wednesday January 18th in the Parish Centre with a meal at 7pm. Please take a brochure from the back of the churches, complete it, and return it to the Parish Office. A warm welcome awaits you and your friends.

**John Hughes**

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## 8TH DAY BIRD BOX

Come and make a bird box for spring Use one of your cold winter mornings to prepare a bird box for your garden or for the churchyard. All box materials will be cut up and provided, but it would be useful to bring a hammer. Geoff Hall will help everyone, youngsters in particular, to assemble their boxes and will give an illustrated talk on attracting birds to use these boxes. Come along on Saturday 28th January; 10.30 to 12.30pm to the Parish Centre.

The 8th Day group have arranged this as one way of improving the biodiversity of our town. Booking is essential and there is a charge of £5

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to cover the materials to make your bird box. Children under 14 should be accompanied by an adult. Please ring 722296 to book a place.

**Isabel Carter**

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## PERSECUTED CHURCH IN NIGERIA

On 20th November at St. Laurence's at the 9.30am and 11.05am services, the men gave a presentation of how the Christian church throughout the world is suffering persecution. At the subsequent Men's Breakfast on December 10th the men decided to do something themselves and contribute direct towards the Bishop's appeal for the persecuted church in Nigeria. Money totalling £170 was sent to the appeal. Our thanks to all those who gave so generously.

Open Doors, Barnabas Fund and Christian Solidarity Worldwide are other charities who do much good work in helping persecuted Christians and the Church worldwide and donations can also be given direct to these charities.

**John Hughes**

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Thanks to Keisha Jenkins (See Matthew 2:1-12)

12-22-2006

I SURE HOPE MY WIFE LIKES MYRRH

January 2012

## PRAYER MEETINGS

The regular Wed prayer meeting will continue at 7:30pm each Wednesday through the Alpha course. As prayer has made a crucial difference to the courses I have been involved with over the years, and Elaine has been a key person in this, the meetings will include Alpha as a major topic each week and any who want to stay on to cover the rest of the evenings in prayer are welcome to do so.

I believe our regular intercessors have made a crucial difference to the parish and life in the Strettons. Indeed sometimes they have prayed with great insight into matters I am sure they knew very little about!

**Richard Hill**

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## WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

This will run from Wednesday 18th to Wednesday 25th January, 2012. The programme of service will be as follows: -

**Wed 18th** 9:30am - URC

**Thurs 19th** 11:30am-St

Laurence's Holy Communion

**Fri 20th** 10.00am-St Milburga's  
Mass

**Sun 22nd** 6:00pm - URC; collection  
for the charity that they normally  
support.

**Mon 23rd** 7:30pm - Society of  
Friends.

**Tues 24th** 1:30pm-Methodist  
Church.

[www.strettonparish.org.uk](http://www.strettonparish.org.uk)

As 2012 is the year of prayer it would be good for us to be well represented at these meetings.

**Richard Hill**

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## 'BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY' - A HUGE SUCCESS!

"Back to Church Sunday 2011 was a huge success: the Church of England reported. On 25th September we joined with many other churches in inviting non-members to come back to church. It is estimated that 77,000 extra people attended church throughout Great Britain on 'Back to Church Sunday' - an average of 19 extra people per participating church.

The concept is simple and successful. On 'Back to Church Sunday', congregations of every different denomination host special services and the invite people they know to attend church. The Bishop of Hertford, the Rt. Rev. Paul Bayes said, "We know that 3 million people in England say they would come back to church if they had an invitation. 'Back to Church Sunday' gives us a fantastic opportunity to do just that". In the Strettons we plan to hold another 'Back to Church Sunday' in 2012, but why wait? Is there a friend or a member of your family who might like an invitation to come along to one of our services?

**John Hughes**



January 2012

## **NEWS FROM ANNE AND KEVIN**

Dear friends,

In September the secondary students started their computer courses. It is hard for us to appreciate the heightened anticipation for them; since the school opened in 2005 not one of them has had access to a computer, and now the whole school is scheduled in to the timetable, including teachers.

The challenge now for the teachers is going to be to try to keep up with the students! Please pray for Kevin as he manages the laboratory, and for the two computer teachers who recently started at the school.

Graduation has happened twice recently, once for the three month Bible School students, and once for the Secondary School form IV leavers. Please pray for Anne, now teaching the next intake of BS students. This will be the last time we have a three month course running. Next January Bishop Joseph is planning to move the six month course from the Amani Centre in Iringa to St Michael's Mission Centre in Kilolo.

At the Secondary School the next year group will be starting the two year 'O' level Bible Knowledge course in January, while the form IV group continues with St Luke's Gospel and the book of Acts.

September was a big month. At the beginning we travelled to Dar es Salaam to meet Kevin's daughter, Rachel, who was visiting for the month. She had kindly agreed to help out with the children's programme at the camp-out for the English speaking Iringa Christian Fellowship which we attend once every two weeks.

Back in Kilolo, Rachel taught in the local kindergarten as well as sitting in on lessons at the secondary school. We enjoyed taking the opportunity to visit Ruaha Game park and a few other places together.

Praise God that the secondary school now has a computer course to offer; continue to pray that funding will be available so that Kevin is able to operate the laboratory for the staff and students.

Give thanks that we were able to make long journeys safely during Rachel's visit.

Pray for our travel to Nairobi this month for a CMS Africa Conference.

Continue to pray for Anne's teaching programme, giving thanks for the students who have completed their courses so far.

With love to you from

**Anne & Kevin Simmons**

# JUST 10

# BAPTISM

The topics for January are:

- 8th - Find True Contentment
- 15th - Hold to the Truth
- 22nd - Prosper with a Clear Conscience
- 29th - 'Affair-proof' Your Relationships

These will help us live a 'whole life discipleship' but also help us know how to help others who struggle in the various areas we will be considering. This will be practical Christian living based on sound theology!

All home groups are encouraged to do this series. Copies of the Leaders' Study Guide with the questions in may be ordered from me. Not all relevant questions can be dealt with in a 15 minute sermon – so the group provides an opportunity to work out the teaching in the situations relevant to the group and to support one another in prayer, where we struggle. Some sessions may also prompt us to find ways of helping people outside the church who are affected by the issues raised.

**Richard Hill**

## BAPTISM ANNIVERSARIES

Korda Roach  
 Kitty Buckingham  
 Findlay Buckingham  
 Lucy Wakefield



On 18th December, at All Saints, we welcomed Tom Ethan Taylor into the church family.

## MEMORIAL BOOK

In December we gave thanks for lives of:

Robert Brewer	4/12/1994
Joan Morris	7/12/1994
Irene Naylor	8/12/2006
Lucy Chappell	13/12/2001
Annie Peock	16/12/1997
Josephine Beagle	16/12/2006
Joyce Woodhouse	20/12/1987
Hilda Holden	21/12/2004
Joan Henderson	22/12/2003
Eric Lester	23/12/1987
Joan Price	26/12/1999
Robert Evans	28/12/1985
Doris Lewis	29/12/1991
Norma Tipton	20/12/1993
Donovan Edwards	31/12/1999

## FUNERALS

The following funerals took place during the last month:

Katie Davies  
 Percy Tarbuck  
 Edith Baker

We hold their families and friends in our prayers.



## **JANUARY PRAYER EVENING**

We are planning our next prayer evening on the 8th January 6pm-7:30pm and the main aim of our time together will be to dedicate the coming year to prayer and seeking God on his plans for our community, our lives and also the worshipping community of our parish.

The new year is a time to take stock and look back over what the previous year has been. Isaiah 63:7 says "I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us— yes, the many good things he has done for Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses".

It will also be an opportunity to look forward to what the next year may have in store - and what better time to ask God to reveal his plans and purposes for us? Please come with expectancy to hear, receive and also contribute to the evening as we seek our way forward into 2012!

Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well". So as we move into the next season as a church and as individuals lets meet together and seek God; ask him to show us the way forward and how to further the work of His kingdom in this place and at this time

**Suzan Williams.**

## **ALPHA TRAINING/PASTORAL CARE AND LEADING GROUPS**

I am inviting all those who are involved in pastoral care to join with those who are leading or helping on the forthcoming Alpha course to come to the Parish Centre on Wed. January 4th at 7:30pm to look at pastoral care. This will include how we help people on in their faith. I believe anyone wanting a basic introduction, as well as more experienced folks, will benefit.

I am inviting all who lead home groups, men's groups or any group for that matter to join with those who will be leading and helping on the forthcoming Alpha course, on Wednesday January 11th at 7.30pm in the Parish centre to look at group leading. I am interested in what training some may have had and I want to lay out principles that enable people to grow, especially those with little background in the Christian faith.

At this meeting we shall fix another time to do an evening on Ministry, covering everything that happens in serving the Lord, but particularly we will be praying for people and leading others into the fullness and gifts of the Holy Spirit and healing in all its forms. All involved in prayer ministry are invited as it will also provide an opportunity to get together all those in the prayer ministry (now led by Christine

Hughes) and any who may be curious to find out more, along with all those involved in leading or helping with groups on Alpha.

Further details from me or John and Christine Hughes.

**Richard Hill**

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## **THIS IS CHRISTMAS**

'A Christmas song from Kim Cleaton'

### **1**

Overcome with grief, the old man sits in the corner.

No-one notices  
as he slowly but surely drinks his life away.

Drunken now, they throw him out onto the street outside;  
no-one comes after him.

Oh, they're too busy having fun to notice a man who's terrified of death taking his last breath.

### **2**

Weak and afraid, the young girl stumbles into the church;  
people pull faces.

"Who is she, daring to burst in during the time of prayer?"

They don't realise that she's just lost her only child,

and now her boyfriend's left her.

Oh, he can find another girl,  
he doesn't need her now that she's failed him.

She doesn't blame him.

### **Chorus**

Come, forget all your fears:  
come and wipe away their tears.  
This is Christmas - it's a time for love.

So come one, come all:  
come and answer the call.  
This is Christmas - it's time to give your all.

### **3**

Cold and alone, a young boy wanders the streets of town;  
some don't even see him -  
and those that do just cross over to the other side.

Fatherless, he looks in vain for someone to take him in:  
no-one wants him.

No, they're too busy with their lives to notice a boy without a Mother;  
he's just another.

### **(Chorus)**

Come, forget all your fears:  
come and wipe away his tears.  
This is Christmas - it's a time for love.  
So come one, come all:  
come and answer the call.  
This is Christmas - it's time to give your all.

### **(Bridge)**

He looks up - who is this reaching out their hand for him to take?  
He says to her, "lady, you must be wrong,"  
but she replies, "There is no mistake.  
No mistake."

### **(Chorus)**

So, forget all your fears:  
'cos I've come to dry your tears.  
This is Christmas - it's a time for love.  
So don't cry, little one,  
'cos I've come to take you home.  
This is Christmas - you are not alone.  
This is Christmas - you are never alone.

*For sheet music or a recording of this song please contact Kim Cleaton (724825).*

## JANUARY SERVICES

		<b>St. Laurence's</b>			<b>St. Michael's</b>		<b>All Saints'</b>	
	8:00am		9:30am	11:05am	6:00pm	10:30am	11:00am	3:00pm
	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Rector	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) Rector	<i>All Age Service</i>  All Age Team		<i>Morning Worship</i>  John Hughes			<i>Evening Prayer</i> (BCP) Nancy Cleaton
<b>1st Jan</b>	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Rector	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) Rector	<i>11.05 Special</i>  Suzan Williams		<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) Rector Louise Magowan	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) John Hughes		
<b>8th Jan</b>	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Nancy Cleaton Suzan Williams	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) Nancy Cleaton Suzan Williams	<i>11.05 Special</i>  Suzan Williams					
<b>15th Jan</b>	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Rector	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) John Hughes Rector	<i>11.05 Special</i>  Rector	<i>Healing Service</i>  Suzan Williams Nancy Cleaton	<i>Morning Worship</i>  Suzan Williams	<i>Morning Prayer</i> (BCP) Tim Oakley		
<b>22nd Jan</b>	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order One) Rector	<i>Morning Worship</i>  Rector Robert Rayner	<i>11.05 Special with Communion</i>  Rector Robert Rayner		<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) URC	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) John Holden		
<b>29th Jan</b>	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Nancy Cleaton	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship) Suzan Williams Nancy Cleaton	<i>11.05 Special</i>  Suzan Williams Nancy Cleaton		<i>Holy Communion</i> (BCP) Tim Oakley	<i>Holy Communion</i> (Common Worship – Order Two) Rector		

## MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Our Marriage Preparation Days have been much appreciated and it has been encouraging to see the number of weddings and blessings in our parish greatly increasing. To help couples prepare for this step in their lives we are offering a day on January 28th from 10am to about 3pm, at the Rectory. The main aim of the day is to get couples to talk to each other about how they communicate including what are called 'love languages' and how to deal with conflict. The handouts feature some lighthearted cartoons along with more serious substance. Some have arrived in fear and trepidation but all have left appreciating the way the days have been conducted, even though different people have helped at different times.

We expect to do another day some time later, maybe in March, as we limit ourselves to four couples per day. We are also very grateful to the Mothers' Union who always put on an excellent spread at lunchtime! We have also been pleasantly amazed at how the couples always get on with the other couples so well even though there has sometimes been a large age difference!

So any more couples planning to get married in 2012 are welcome to be in touch with me as soon as possible!

**Richard Hill**

## INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE A HOME GROUP

In order to enable people to think about joining a home group, we are firstly inviting anyone who has not done an Alpha course before to join the January course. For people who cannot go out on a winter's evening, we expect to run another one in the daytime some time soon.

We are also putting on a display of the current groups and saying that anyone may approach the leader and come along for a one night taster. If they do not like the group or want to try two or three they may do so. Details will appear in Contact when we are ready.

Meanwhile can every group give a picture and details of something about the group to Sue Conant (722610) to enable the display to be done? Thank you.

**Richard Hill**

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### **Deadline:**

The deadline for submissions for the January edition of Church Matters is **Sunday 22nd Jan**. If possible, can all articles be be emailed to [simon.cleaton@talk21.com](mailto:simon.cleaton@talk21.com) preferably in the form of **unformatted** Word Documents. Alternatively, drop them in to the Parish Office.

## DATES OF INTEREST FOR JANUARY 2012

Date	Time	Event	Location
4th	7:30pm	Pastoral Care Training	Parish Centre
8th	6pm	Prayer Event	St. Laurence's
11th	7:30pm	Leading Groups Training	Parish Centre
18th	7pm	ALPHA Course begins	Parish Centre
21st	3pm	Bellringing Service with tea	St. Laurence's
22nd	6pm	United Service	URC
23rd	7pm	ECC	St. Michael's
25th	7pm	ALPHA Course	Parish Centre
26th	10:15am	Assembly to mark Education Sunday	St. Lawrence's Primary school
28th	10am	Marriage Preparation course	Rectory

### Also on in January:

- 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, Parish Centre
- Worship Choir every Wednesday, 7:30pm, Venue TBC

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](http://www.strettonparish.org.uk).

The eagle eyed amongst you may have noticed that the staff contact details are missing from this issue. This is due to me deciding to produce a smaller issue this time, and in order to fit everything in, the contact details were squeezed out!

Staff contact details can be found on the back of contact, in previous (and future!) Church Matters and on the church website at [www.strettonparish.org.uk](http://www.strettonparish.org.uk)

I'd like to wish all readers a very merry Christmas and joyful, yet peaceful, New Year.