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Why we are waiting?

This Sunday the Church begins its New Year and enters the season of waiting before Christmas, called Advent.

Decades ago waiting was a large part of everyday life. Journeys took longer, news of loved ones came by post and meals were prepared from scratch and cooked slowly in the oven. Now life has speeded up. E-mail, supermarkets, motorways, budget flights, fast-food, mobile phones and the internet have all meant we are becoming unused to waiting and uncomfortable with time spent "doing nothing".

Sometimes waiting can be associated with fear of failure or dread – waiting to hear the results of a job interview or for the results of an x-ray or biopsy. But more often we don't like waiting because it feels like time spent waiting is time wasted.

In the Christian tradition waiting is not associated with wasting time but with watching. The Christian Scriptures urge us to wait for the Lord and Bible stories are packed with waiting. Think of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) or Noah's Ark (Genesis 6) for example.

Waiting means watching with anticipation– on tip toes with neck craned – as if trying to pick out a family member on a crowded platform or peering intently across a football pitch to see if the penalty hits the back of the net.

That is how we try to journey through Advent. For most of us it is a busy time as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ with our families, in our churches and with our colleagues and friends. But waiting is the essence of Advent – as we look forward in joyful expectation to the celebration of the birth of a baby, Jesus Christ, who revealed the human face of God.

However Advent is not just about remembering a life lived more than two thousand years ago. For the work of Jesus did not end at Christmas, Good Friday, or even at Easter. That work continues every

day as God transforms the world, through people of all kinds, to bring healing, sustain the environment, mend relationships and find ways of ending conflict. Advent is also about looking forward to the time when Jesus will return to reveal the fullness of his Kingdom of love, joy and peace.

Our scriptures say God is preparing a final banquet for all people. And until that wonderful banquet is served we each have a part to play - like hosts at a party we can welcome people, create a hospitable atmosphere, ensure the conversation is relaxed and that there is nourishing food. (Holy Communion is called a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.)

So in Advent I hope you will wait with me as God waits for us and with us - actively working to make all welcome at the best party to which we could ever be invited.

This year the Church of England has set up an on-line calendar to help you think about waiting - it is at www.whywearewaiting.com.

God bless you as you wait.

+David

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Topical Comment

Mission-Shaped Church

A little while ago I read a book by Jim Collins called 'Good to Great'. It's the story of 10 large companies in America which have grown from good companies to great companies over the past 20 years, and it looks at the values of those companies and their leadership. In one chapter Jim Collins speaks of a meeting he had with Admiral Jim Stockdale, where the two men discussed the Admiral's long imprisonment in a Vietnamese prisoner-of-war camp. Stockdale received huge recognition for the extraordinary courage that he demonstrated over eight years in prison. 'How did you do it?', was the question Collins put to him: 'How did you keep hope alive?'

'I never lost faith in the end of the story', was Stockdale's answer: 'I never doubted not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end, and turn the experience into the most important event of my life'.

As the walk continued, another question occurred to Collins: 'Who didn't make it out?', he asked. 'Oh, that's easy', replied Stockdale, 'The optimists... They were the ones who said "We're going to be out by Christmas". And Christmas would come, and Christmas would go. Then they'd say, "We're going to be out by Easter". And Easter would come, and Easter would go'. And then Thanksgiving, and then it would be Christmas again. And they died of a broken heart'.

'This is a very important lesson', concluded Stockdale: 'You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you cannot afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be'.

And I was very excited in the year 2004 when the Church of England produced a report called 'Mission Shaped Church': because here was an official report which confronted the brutal reality that the church was in serious decline in many parts of our country, while also suggesting realistic, practical ways in which that situation could be turned right around.

Every church community needs to be a missionary community – perhaps that wasn't quite so true in previous generations, where many people went to church; but it's certainly true now. But one of the key insights of M-S Church was its recognition that every church community needs to be a missionary community in its own way. Yes, there are excellent resources out there for us to use – yes, there are inspiring lessons we can learn from other places. But the mission of every church community needs to spring from its own people, its own life, its own unique character. It's a little like planning a piece of wood: the best way to plane it is to go with the grain and not against the grain. And where an approach to mission goes completely against the grain – where's it's forced on a reluctant church – it's never going to take root or bear fruit.

Perhaps I could give some examples from my own experience, while recognising that most of us would have similar stories to tell: and my first story is one where we got it wrong.

1. When I first arrived in Twickenham there was a small group of young adults who were concerned that we weren't reaching out to many of the young people who thronged the streets on weekend evenings: and so they decided to put together an event called 'Gel' on a Friday night, a kind of Christian nightclub event in the function room of a local pub.

The sound equipment needed was very expensive, but the group was both talented and enthusiastic, and I gave the project the go-ahead. What I hadn't realised at that point, though, was that very few of the young adults in the church had ever been anyway near a nightclub, and for them it was a wholly alien experience. As a result they proved fairly unmotivated in inviting their non-Christian peers to the place which they would never have frequented themselves, and after about a year and a half we had to close it down. Looking back it was a classic example of a mission initiative which went against the grain of the character of the church. It was something we had added on, if you like, rather than something that naturally flowed from our life together.

And I deliberately start with that story, because it reminds us that any mission initiative is fragile, risky, on the edge, and quite liable to fail; we're all learning here – no-one has ever tried to minister in a culture quite like ours before – so that getting something wrong often

seems to be an essential step towards getting something right. It was Winston Churchill, after all, who defined success as 'the ability to go from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm'! And over the following years – I'm delighted to say – we started to get some things right.

2. A group called Mothers and Others decided they were rather too inward looking, and planned to open up the church itself twice a week as a meeting place for local families. After a year they had 70 families coming along, and from there they started a parenting course, then a crisis pregnancy centre, then a daytime Alpha course, then a group called 'Bus-Stop', which included time for prayer, worship and a short Bible story. One Muslim lady came along, who had tried for many years to have children. The group prayed for her, and within two months she was pregnant. So she started bringing her family along, and regularly gave thanks to the Jesus who had healed her. It was a mission initiative: but one which went with the grain of the character of the church.

3. We saw a similar development in our ministry among the homeless. For some years between 25 and 50 homeless people were coming to our church for dinner on a Thursday night. Towards the end of the evening, the guests were invited to a prayer group and simple Bible study; and a surprising number of people came along. Then a member of the team – who'd become a Christian himself from a life on the streets – started a simplified Alpha course – and for an increasing number of people, church was what happened on a Thursday night.

4. Once you start with this way of doing things, other people in the congregation begin to step forward with their own sense of vision and calling. Some of the teenagers, my daughter Hannah among them, began to set up Christian groups in their schools and colleges. Some of the older people started monthly services in two homes for the elderly, and one lady - a 95-year old called Mary Cornford - began a Bible study group in her room, attended by 7 or 8 others. A young man called Kevin then began a youth congregation on a tough local housing estate, and now lives on the estate and is devoting half his week to the ministry there.

5. On a bigger scale we committed ourselves to church planting; to starting three new congregations with the permission of our bishop in different parts of our area. The first two were into church buildings where the Sunday congregation had declined to just 10 or 15 people; in each case we sent another 50 along from St. Stephen's, and those churches are now thriving. Our third church plant was onto a large housing estate where there was no church presence at all – and that too is going well.

6. It would be easy to tell more stories, but I'd just like to finish my input with drawing out a few principles which I have learnt along the way:

i. Both individuals and churches tend to enjoy life more, and to be

more fruitful when their mission activity goes with the grain and not against it.

ii. Any idea that every church should be the same is therefore completely wrong.

iii. Effective mission initiatives take place where there is an overlap between three things: God's call, the gifts and passions within the church, and the needs of the local community. All 3 ingredients are vital: for example, the best way to drive a church into the ground is to simply look at the needs of the community and to assume that we ought to try to meet all of them!

iv. Missionary leadership takes seriously the vision and passion of the members of a church, and is permission-giving: in other words, it tends to say 'yes' more often than 'no'; it sees the church as a living, breathing organism rather than a rigid hierarchical organisation; it celebrates the stories of those who are taking initiative, and prefers people to try and fail than not to try at all. 2 gardens...

v. (and finally): The key issue in all of this is the commitment of the church and the depth of our discipleship. Experience demonstrates that it's passionate people who give and serve sacrificially, and who make much the best missionaries; experience also teaches that passion is caught not taught.

A mission agenda therefore has to take seriously the need for a rising spiritual temperature among both clergy and lay people. That's expressed in preaching, liturgy, sung worship, and the sharing of personal stories of where God is at work; it's expressed in small groups, in prayer for one another, in mission opportunities, retreats and Christian conferences; it's expressed in a growing openness to the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. And perhaps the length of that list reminds us that mission can never be an optional extra.

All of church needs to be shaped by the mission of Jesus to seek and save the lost, and to bring God's Kingdom to those places which, in the words of St. Paul, are 'without God and without hope in this world'.

*+Andrew
Bishop of Aston*

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News

The Big Green Give-Away

02 December 2008

More than 250 shoppers in Birmingham City Centre were given a free present to add to their basket as Christians gathered to distribute quality gifts as a sign of the generosity of God.

The gifts had all been donated by Christians from across the Diocese of Birmingham as part of the Green Advent initiative to reduce waste

and overspending at Christmas.

The gifts were given personally to people who were encouraged to come inside the Cathedral and choose themselves an early Christmas present. Among those to receive gifts were visitors from Egypt, students from Portugal, grandparents, young families, Big Issue vendors and some of the young people who gather around St Philip's churchyard.

Before the give-away the Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Revd David Urquhart, led a short service of lament and worshippers were invited to mark themselves with ash as a sign of repentance for the mis-use of God's gift of creation.

Operation Noah Campaign Strategist Mark Dowd preached at the service. He told the congregation that 'Matter matters' and urged the church to campaign on climate issues before the Copenhagen climate summit of 2009.

Bishop David said: "It was a wonderful day that started off at the Household Recycling Centre in Lifford Lane where we saw the City Council doing their best to recycle the waste generated by householders. At the Cathedral we saw unwanted presents transformed into unexpected gifts for people who were both surprised and delighted to receive a good quality present which cost them nothing.

"At Christmas we remember God's gift of his son, Jesus, and we are constantly mindful of God's gifts of creation, relationship and forgiveness - the chance to have a new start. None of these can be wrapped up or bought in a store but they bring joy, peace and love to us all.

"We are not saying don't give gifts this year or don't buy anything. What we are saying is buy gifts that will last, that are wanted and appreciated and which are affordable. And, above all, give time to your family, friends and colleagues to have fun together and build strong households, communities and neighbourhoods."

The Big Green Give-Away was held in Birmingham Cathedral on Colmore Row on Saturday November 29th. Short services were held at Shidas Lane recycling centre in Oldbury and Lifford Lane recycling centre in Kings Norton.

Photo 1. Harriet, (10), Joel (6) and Thomas (10) Foster at the Green give-away

Photo 2. Joe (5) & Frank (3) Murphy with the Rt Revd David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham and the Revd Canon Nigel Hand (as Father Christmas)

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Malawi Calendars

02 December 2008

At the end of October a sample Malawi Calendar and order forms were posted to every church in the diocese - either to the vicar or to a named world mission representative (if we know of one for your parish). I do hope that these have all been received, and that you are all selling calendars.

Thank you to those that have already made an order. I hope that you will help us as we seek to raise more money than ever before from the sales of the calendars, which we believe are even better than those produced in previous years. Please encourage people in your church/es to purchase calendars, and make an order yourselves using the forms that are displayed in your church.

If these forms have gone astray or not reached you then please contact Sally who will send or email you them. If you have a Christmas Fayre between now and the New Year it would be fantastic if you took a box to sell - (paying afterwards for the calendars that you sell and returning the rest). Please get in touch if you would like to do this and we will try to arrange for delivery.

Thank you for your support, and every blessing for Christmas. For any help with calendars please contact Sally Bossingham on: 0121 262 1852 / missionforum@birminghamcathedral.com

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Pastoral Ministry with Older People

02 December 2008

Dr James Woodward, Director of the Leveson Centre and vicar of Temple Balsall is one of the authors of the publication, Mission-Shaped Church for Older People.

Speaking after the launch of the very practical resource he said: "I had the privilege of travelling up to The Wilson Carlile Campus which houses the headquarters of the Church Army. Mike Collyer and Claire Dalpra had organised an excellent afternoon conference which gathered a 100 people together to think about our mission and ministry to older people.

"I was glad to be able to connect with Mark Russell who spoke energetically and passionately about older people as a mission resource. The Leveson Centre's partnership with the Church Army has been a creative one and we are both very proud of this new resource. The publication offers practical suggestions for local churches together with some reflective material to help people understand age and ageing. We were grateful to the Archbishop of

York who has commended the resource and for many people who have taken up the opportunity to buy it and use it."

Last month SPCK published a book by James called 'Valuing Age', which focuses on pastoral care and practical theology in the light of age and ageing. It will help carers in many different settings to understand older people and the issues they face, their hopes and fears, their problems and possibilities. In particular, it looks at how theories of age relate to our experience and how experience might challenge and shape our theologies.

Valuing Age will be launched in the House of Lords in January. Visit www.spck.org.uk

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

St Philip and St James, Hodge Hill - An Update from the Archdeacon of Aston

02 December 2008

You may know from the press coverage that there is serious structural damage to the building to the extent that public liability insurance can no longer be given. Very substantial funds would be needed to bring this building back into safe and proper use and to a standard that would serve for the foreseeable future. This sum is quite beyond the capacity of the church in Hodge Hill and the Diocese of Birmingham. Indeed, parish church funds have been exhausted maintaining the use of the building thus far. Recent fund-raising for just fifteen thousands pounds for some basic repairs did not achieve the sum of money needed.

There have been a number of expressions of sadness and regret, which we greatly appreciate. To date there had been no offers of the kind of substantial financial help that would have given realistic hope to the parochial church council to continue with the current building. In the circumstances, the parochial church council have voted unanimously to seek demolition of the building. They are especially concerned about maintaining a boarded up shell that is at risk with regard to safety, arson and accidents happening to any intruder. The following statement has been prepared to be included in the forthcoming parish magazine for December:

"On November 13th, St Philip and St James' PCC voted unanimously to demolish the church centre building. The site will be fenced off until redevelopment takes place.

The Rectory, Garden of Rest and a large cross will remain undisturbed. The Garden of Rest will be inside the fencing so a lockable gate will be fitted and access arranged for those wishing to visit and tend the Garden.

It is the PCC's intention that a Christian presence will continue on the

site and this will inform us as we make plans for the future.

Please pray about the future of the site and for the PCC which will be working with the Bishop towards finding a new priest, and then considering future possibilities for the site."

Meanwhile, I am pleased that the Church of England in Hodge Hill has a very effective partnership with the United Reformed Church in Hodge Hill for worship, mission and community service. Our parish work is continuing now on that secure basis and in that building. We will continue to support a parish priest in Hodge Hill.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

'Hoody shepherds' bring good news to Birmingham

01 December 2008

Hoody shepherds, Mary made of children's prayers and rooftop angels are just part of an outdoor nativity trail which has been installed across the city centre to retell the Christmas stories to thousands of people who work, live and shop in Birmingham.

The trail of five installations, entitled 'Joy to the World', starts at St Martin in the Bull Ring, with Mary and the Archangel Gabriel. The trail then travels to Carrs Lane Church, with the Three Wise Men. The next stop is a shop front in the Pavilions Shopping Centre where we see Mary, Joseph and the donkey travelling to Bethlehem. From there we travel to St Phillips Cathedral to see the Shepherds and an angel finishing at the craft market adjacent to the entrance of Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery for the final Nativity scene. The scenes were made by a group of artists from St Mary's Church and school in Harborne. The figures in the craft market were made by Catherine Lewis and belong to St Martin's Church.

The Nativity theme continues with the gallery's annual Nativity Trail as seen through 500 years of art. Both Nativity Trails were officially launched by the Bishop of Birmingham, the Rt Revd David Urquhart who led schoolchildren and city centre church leaders around the outdoor trail on Monday December 1st.

Organiser of the trail, Canon Stewart Jones, Rector of St Martin's in the Bull Ring church, said: "This nativity trail is a gift from churches in the city centre to the people of Birmingham.

"It has been made possible through people working together including Birmingham City Council, Retail Birmingham, the City Centre Partnership, The Pavilions along with the churches of Believing in Birmingham and I would like to thank them all for making this happen.

"The trail is called Joy to the World and tells the Christmas story that has been told and retold for more than 2,000 years but it has some

contemporary twists to help us understand that Christmas is not just about history but about the gift of God for all people in all times - a gift that brings love, joy and peace.

"We chose to represent the shepherds as hoodies as we think that the shepherds in Bethlehem were regarded in their culture pretty much as hoodies are sometimes portrayed today. We left many of the faces blank so people could put themselves in the shoes of the people like Mary and the Wise Men."

Bishop David said: "I am delighted open these two trails and very pleased that the real story of Christmas is being expressed imaginatively in this city of faiths."

Rita McLean; Head of Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery said; "The Nativity Trail at the Museum and Art Gallery has been a huge success and I am delighted that we can join forces with the city's churches to tell the story of Christmas for everyone to enjoy."

Further information from Canon Stewart Jones, Rector, St Martin in the Bull Ring. (0121 6006020 email; stewart@bullring.org)

For more information about the Museum and Art Gallery Nativity Trail please contact Carmel Girling on 0121 303 2923
carmel.girling@birmingham.gov.uk

Photo. Children who helped make the figures sit with the Bishop of Birmingham the Rt Revd David Urquhart by the Hoody Shepherds outside St Philips Cathedral. The clothes of the figures are made of photographs of the young people who gather in the Cathedral churchyard

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Selection of Candidates for Reader Ministry

27 November 2008

Readers are lay people who have been selected and trained for a particular ministry in the Church of England. They are authorised by the Bishop to:

- Ø Preach and teach the faith
- Ø Give pastoral care
- Ø Lead public worship

Interested? Do you feel God is calling you to this ministry within your own church? Well, the time to act is now, as applications for the next selection conference are now invited.

The 2009 Selection Conference will be held on Saturday, 6th June and completed applications must be returned by 31st March 2009 to be considered.

All potential candidates should contact the Initial Training Secretary, Juliet Bakker, 5 Chestnut Grove Coleshill B46 1AD. Tel: 01675 465739, e-mail: julietbakker@btconnect.com for an application pack.

Additional information about Reader Ministry is available on the Readers Web site www.ReadersBirmingham.org.uk together with further details about the process for becoming a Reader.

Clergy are reminded that in nominating a candidate they are making a commitment to support the candidate both during training and upon licensing. It is not possible to license a Reader to a parish during an interregnum; similarly, the training course requires a partnership with the incumbent who assists in the nurture, growth and development of the candidate during the training process. The Warden for Readers' Ministry, the Revd Martin Stephenson, is available for consultation on 0121 777 1935.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

The Brummy Mummy that wants to keep you Waiting

26 November 2008

A leading Birmingham theologian is being featured on a Church of England website which aims to put the waiting back into wanting as the countdown to Christmas begins.

Church leaders are launching an online Advent calendar quoting an Abbot, a Bishop and Canon Theologian Dr Paula Gooder from Birmingham.

The calendar was launched by Paula Gooder, Bishop Stephen Cottrell of Reading and Father Christopher Jamison, Abbot of Worth, who was featured in the BBC Series The Monastery. They invited passers-by to join them in a 'waiting room' set up outside Westminster Abbey in central London. You can see a You Tube video of the launch edited by Ruth Gledhill of the Times here http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=3Njd2sKuf_4&eurl=http://timescolumns.typepad.com/gledhill/2008/11/dear-g_d-i-cant.html

The website www.WhyWeAreWaiting.com features an introductory film of the Archbishop of Canterbury and an Advent Calendar with a difference, made up of reflections, podcasts and waiting tips.

Podcasts will include the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Dr John Sentamu, Oxford Professor of Psychology, Dr Mark Williams, TV presenter Mark Dowd of Operation Noah and theologian Dr Jane Williams.

Reflections are taken from three recently published books that all explore the theme of waiting. They are: Finding Happiness - Monastic Steps for Fulfilling Life by Christopher Jamison, Roman Catholic Abbot

of Worth Abbey; Do Nothing: Christmas is Coming by the Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Reading, and The Meaning is in the Waiting by Dr Paula Gooder, Canon Theologian at Birmingham Cathedral.

Through a series of seasonal hints the website suggests ways of waiting for your wallet, waiting for your soul and waiting for the environment.

Dr Gooder, who was asked to write the Advent book by the Archbishop of York, the Most Revd Dr John Sentamu, teaches theology both across the UK and overseas. She is in wide demand as a speaker and has given talks to thousands of people, in many different venues from the Greenbelt Arts festival to Westminster Abbey. She lives in Bournville with her husband and two daughters aged 5 and 9.

She said: "This calendar gives you daily candy for your soul which is also good for your wai(s)t. I could never bear waiting and thought it was an utter waste of time until I was pregnant and understood that waiting was a vital part of human experience which is life-giving and joyful.

"This calendar is particularly timely with credit crunch limiting our spending and climate change looming on the horizon. We hope it will encourage people to enjoy Advent as time of preparation for Christmas in a way that is not manic and stressful but unhurried and good for the soul."

The www.WhyWeAreWaiting.com website, launched on November 24, begins on Sunday November 30 - Advent Sunday, when the season of Advent officially begins.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Charity of Jane Kate Gilbert

26 November 2008

Does your parish lie partly or entirely within the City of Birmingham? Or perhaps there are people in your congregation, or known to your church members, who live within the city and who would qualify for support from the Charity of Jane Kate Gilbert.

Trustees of this charity, appointed by Birmingham City Council and by the Diocese, meet in March and November and award pensions and one-off payments to persons in need who must be:

- Resident in the City of Birmingham for two years
- Over 65 years of age
- Recommended in writing by a representative of a supporting organisation (which could be a local church) as someone who is in 'conditions of need, hardship or distress'.

Pensioners of the charity receive a modest payment each quarter – at present this stands at £25 per quarter. There are 31 places for pensioners but at present only 9 of these places are taken and the Trustees would be interested to hear, from clergy or from other representatives, of anyone who could benefit.

One-off payments are made for a variety of reasons when an individual is in need. The maximum awarded is £100.

The Trustees would be glad to hear from clergy or other church representatives. For further details and application forms please contact:

Mr Phil Wright, Committee Services, The Council House,
Victoria Square, Birmingham, B1 1BB Telephone 0121
303 2023

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Prayer Calendar Available on-line

26 November 2008

The Winter 08 Diocesan Prayer Calendar is available to download. To download the prayer calendar click [here](#).

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Notification of Appointments

24 November 2008

The Revd Barry Smart
Vicar, All Saints Small Heath
To be: Chaplain, Compton Hospice (Lichfield) (January)

The Revd Jeremy Knapp
Team Vicar, St John the Divine & St Patrick Salter Street and Shirley
To be: Vicar, St Margaret Olton (January)

The Revd Paul Hinton
Assistant Curate, St Giles Rowley Regis
To be: Vicar, St Hilda Warley Woods (February)

The Revd Beverley Watson
Formerly Assistant Curate, St Mary Spring Grove (London)
To be: P/t Assistant Curate, The Parish of Aston and Netchells
(November)

The Revd Simon Thorburn
Vicar, St George Edgbaston
To be: Vicar, St Oswald Oswestry (Lichfield) (February)

Re Revd Dr Justus Omoyajowo
 Priest in Charge, St Edburgha Yardley
 To be: Vicar, Ss Jude and Paul Mildmay Grove (London) (January)

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Update from the Church of England

24 November 2008

'WhyWeAreWaiting'? - launch of the CofE's Advent campaign

An Abbot, a Bishop and a Canon Theologian are set to launch an Advent website aiming to put the ABC of waiting back into wanting as the countdown to Christmas begins. The website - www.WhyWeAreWaiting.com - will include an introductory film featuring the Archbishop of Canterbury and an Advent Calendar with a difference made up of reflections, podcasts, and waiting tips. The website has been produced by the Church of England and will be launched by the three church leaders on Monday, November 24. More details at www.cofe.anglican.org/news next week. Separately, www.paperlesschristmas.org.uk offers a time-locked Advent countdown of 24 videos produced by Jerusalem Productions Limited, in association with Bible Reading Fellowship.

Tens of thousands turn to CofE for credit crunch advice and prayer

As the financial situation across the globe worsens tens of thousands are continuing to turn to online prayer and advice provided by the Church of England. The credit crunch is the biggest news story of 2008 - often the main item in television and newspapers reports. See our [debt](#) section on how to get help or click [here](#) to view prayers.

Synod members put questions to church bodies

The Church of England's General Synod has held its third virtual question time. The text of all 28 Questions and Answers is now available on the Church of England web site, at:

<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/about/gensynod/agendas/qn08.pdf>

Members directed Questions to the Church Commissioners, the Ministry Division and the Archbishops' Council, among others.

Message from Archbishop of Canterbury and Chief Rabbi on Auschwitz visit

Dr Rowan Williams with the Chief Rabbi, Sir Jonathan Sacks, invited representatives from all the religious communities to join the Holocaust Educational Trust's Lessons from Auschwitz Project on a one day visit to the former Nazi camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland. The full text of the joint message can be found [here](#).

Archbishop in "buy British" plea

The Archbishop of York Dr John Sentamu urged shoppers to buy British when he spoke at the North East County National Farmers Union Centenary dinner at York Racecourse. "The situation for many livestock farmers is that they would be better off financially if they gave up producing cattle and sheep. Add in the

other risks associated with keeping livestock and the disincentives to continue with production enterprises will soon become overwhelming. Buying British, buying locally and buying directly from farmers can all help as simple measures. A Government led campaign which promotes each of these would be a good start," he said. The full speech can be read [here](#).

Royal Mail receives Church of England's stamp of approval

The Church of England has warmly welcomed the Royal Mail's decision this year to issue Christmas stamps with a Christian theme in parallel to their 'Pantomime' series. The Royal Mail has printed tens of millions of both sets of stamps. Customers can buy stamps depicting two classic, iconic paintings - the Madonna of Humility by Lippo di Dalmasio, and Madonna and Child by William Dyce. More details [here](#).

Church Commissioners - Investment updates and Investing in mission

- Reflecting on current financial challenges, First Church Estates Commissioner Andreas Whittam Smith's [article](#) for the *Church Times* sets out the Commissioners' response and current investment strategy. For more information his latest [quarterly update](#) on the Church Commissioners' fund is also available.
- A report on dioceses' use of the Commissioners' [mission development funding](#) - totalling £24 million in its first six years - illustrates a range of supported projects and initiatives across dioceses and parishes. It concludes that the new funding stream has been a 'risk worth taking'. The report is offered as a learning resource for dioceses.

Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference and Church of England House of Bishops join together for second bi-lateral meeting

The Church of England House of Bishops and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales joined together for a second bi-lateral meeting, this time at Lambeth Palace. In 2006, they met together in Leeds for study and worship. They day was chaired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams and the Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor. More details [here](#).

Year of the Child 2009

Church leaders are being encouraged to help make 2009 'a year to remember' for young people and the Church with the launch of an interdenominational *Year of the Child*, to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the United Nations' International Year of the Child. A network of Children's Advisers from across the Church of England's dioceses, alongside representatives from the Methodist Church and other denominations and agencies, plans to promote 2009 as an opportunity for local churches to review the work they do with and for children and young people, and to do more to recognise and celebrate their contribution in the life of the church and society. More details [here](#).

God's world is a gift on trust: Theme for Education Sunday 2009

Churches are being encouraged to 'save the date' for next year's Education Sunday - which will highlight the role of schools and colleges in helping young people lead lives that recognise the vital importance of caring for God's creation. Education Sunday is the national day of prayer and celebration for all those

involved in the world of education, traditionally marked on the ninth Sunday before Easter, which falls on Sunday 8 February in 2009. Full details [here](#).

Statistics show increased ordinations, vocations and giving

New Church of England statistics have been published today alongside confirmation of attendance figures released earlier this year. They show increases in the number of clergy being trained and ordained as well as increases in the amount parishioners are donating towards the mission of the Church. The figures confirm the changing patterns of church attendance, published earlier this year. Full details [here](#).

Save or delete - click no further

New guidance has been published to support diocesan offices in managing the huge volume of files, paperwork and other correspondence they deal with. *Save or Delete - the Care of Diocesan Records* is a free resource designed to help diocesan officers distinguish between the different kinds of records within their care and decide how long and where they need to be kept. The guidance itemises many of the types of records likely to be generated and held by different departments, divisions or boards of the diocese, and how these documents should be stored. Read the full story [here](#).

'Village Church for Village Life' Competition

Following a successful campaign in 2008, Country Life magazine has launched the Village Church for Village Life Award 2009, with a £10,000 prize for the winning church. The award seeks to discover the finest example of a historic, rural parish church that has successfully engaged the wider community to create a focus for village life in the 21st century. This year, the award is being expanded to include projects that make use of 'God's own acre' (the churchyard), and to recognise those that have attempted to make their churches environmentally sustainable.

More information and an entry form, together with details of last year's award, will shortly be available at www.countrylife.co.uk/villagechurch.

Preparing the Way for a new Liturgical Year

Church House Publishing's latest seasonal bulletin offers a hamper of seasonal products to resource, inspire and challenge you and your church for Advent and beyond. From *Do Nothing: Christmas is Coming*, in which Bishop Stephen Cottrell offers readers "another way of celebrating Christmas, where its joys and promises can help put life back together again", to information on CHP's popular range of Christmas cards - from traditional stained glass images to contemporary art - via news on the fifth instalment of daily Bible reading notes *Reflections for Daily Prayer*, the bulletin is [here](#).

CofE welcomes survey results on Schools Admissions Code

The Church of England's Board of Education has responded to the publication of the results of the recent survey of school admissions policies by Sir Philip Hunter, the Chief Schools Adjudicator. Read the response from the Revd Janina Ainsworth, the CofE's Chief Education Officer [here](#).

Poll praises parents

The nation's most heroic role is that of a parent, according to a national poll of children run by the Church of England and The Children's Society. The Rt Revd

Mark Davies, the Bishop of Middleton, revealed the results of the on-line poll to find the most heroic job in the UK at a ceremony in Manchester Cathedral. Out of the 25 jobs nominated by a selection of school children, the poll revealed that the UK's most heroic jobs were parents followed by fire-fighters and soldiers. Full details on the poll [here](#).

New 'Partners in World Development' website

A new website has been launched to help link up the Church of England's extensive national network of local campaigners on world development issues to help amplify the Church's voice on crucial global topics. The 'Partners in World Development' site, www.wdanetwork.org.uk, provides parishes with up-to-date information on issues such as trade justice, debt relief and climate change. It also provides profiles of many Church of England dioceses, with overviews of the projects they have underway and details of their link dioceses overseas. Full details [here](#).

Fresh Expressions change in leadership

The Revd Dr Steven Croft, currently Archbishops' Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions team, is to be the next Bishop of Sheffield. Downing Street has announced. Dr Croft succeeds Bishop Jack Nicholls, who retired earlier this year. Full story [here](#). The Bishop of Maidstone the Rt Revd Graham Cray is to become the new Archbishops' Missioner and Leader of the Fresh Expressions team following Dr Croft's appointment, more details [here](#)

Expert advice for churches employing a youth or children's worker

A practical guide for parishes considering employing someone to work with children or young people has been released by Church House Publishing. *Sure Foundations: Employing Youth and Children's Workers* offers guidance for every stage of the process of appointing a new parish worker, including the appointment process, procedures and management issues. More details [here](#)

Archbishop of York: education

- Dr Sentamu defends Church schools - details [here](#)
- New Academy opens in East Hull - details [here](#)

Archbishop of Canterbury:

- **Visit to Birmingham** - details [here](#)
- **Remembrance Service** at Chapel of St Peter and Vincula, HM - details [here](#)
- The Archbishop wrote earlier this week to the **Moderators of the Church of North India and the Church of South India** to express his solidarity with Christians during the current troubles. The full text can be found [here](#)
- Rowan Williams, has awarded the **Cross of St Augustine** to members of the 2008 Lambeth Conference Design Group at a ceremony at Lambeth Palace. Details [here](#)
- The Archbishop of Canterbury today sent his annual message to Hindu communities for the festival of **Diwali**. Full text [here](#)

CofE training courses 2009

The 2009 programme of Tailor made communications training courses is now online at <http://www.commstraining.cofe.anglican.org/2009/index.php> Please share with colleagues in your diocese who you think would be interested. In addition, if you have a group of people at your diocese that you would like to train together, or if you need to cover a topic that isn't in our published programme, we can create a bespoke course for you. Please call 020 7898 1465 to discuss your requirements.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Resources available for churches to mark Lent

24 November 2008

You may be planning on various ways for your church to mark Lent and we hope that the following information on the latest resources from Church House Publishing might be of interest. You may also want to bear in mind the interactive Lent pilgrimage blog being devised by Christian Aid (see <http://www.christianaid.org.uk/lent/pilgrimage/>). This is a day-by-day virtual visit to the Holy Lands - meeting Palestinian Christians, talking to peacemakers from across the region and walking in the footsteps of Jesus.

More than a quarter of a million Love Life Live Lent booklets have been sold over the past two years.

If you're new to the Love Life Live Lent craze, it's this simple: complete a small act of kindness or thoughtfulness, suggested each day in handy booklet, and supplement it with a healthy dose of regular prayer... and discover that doing something positive can be as transforming as giving something up.

Love Life Live Lent returns for a third year with two pocket-sized booklets based on the 'best of' the previous series - one for children, and one for young people and adults - and, new for 2009, a family book packed with extra hints, tips and advice on completing a Lent's worth of actions as a family. This attractive resource book includes all the actions from the booklets, plus extra activities, recipes and prayers - ideal for using alongside the family wallchart, downloadable from www.livelent.net (this website will go live by January).

The price of the small booklets has been held at £1 each (discount available for bulk orders) and the family book costs £4.99. Find our more and order copies for you and your church now at: <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/product.asp?id=2394409>

Your survival pack for life's challenges, delivered in five instalments.

Lentwise is a brand new five-session course designed for small groups to use during Lent, reflecting on how the strengths of Christian faith can help us weather the challenges of life. Lecturer and Canon

Theologian Dr Paula Gooder uses fresh insights from John's gospel to help answer the question: what spiritual essentials will help us survive life's storms?

Five survival tips are explored, one by one, over 90 minute sessions: direction, nourishment, wisdom, refreshment and security.

The book's honest confrontation with the realities of modern life is reflected in Jane William's praise for the course: "User-friendly, undaunting and profound. The author is an experienced and trustworthy guide on our journey through Lent. With her help, Lent will be a journey of delighted discovery and not a miserable, dutiful trudge."

Each book costs just £4.99: for more details, or to order, visit: <http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/product.asp?id=2394309>

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

'Village Church for Village Life' Award

24 November 2008

Following an extremely successful campaign in 2008, Country Life magazine is supporting a second competition - the Village Church for Village Life Award 2009 - worth £10,000.

The award seeks to discover the finest example of a historic, rural parish church that has successfully engaged the wider community to create a focus for village life in the 21st century.

Those who nominate churches will be asked to demonstrate that the whole community - worshipers and non-worshippers alike - has played an active role in the relevant project. In addition, this year the award is being expanded to include projects that make use of 'God's own acre' (the churchyard), and to recognise those that have attempted to make their churches environmentally sustainable.

The 2008 competition received an unprecedented response. Nominations came in from across England with 30 of the Church of England's 43 diocese represented. The quality of the entries was high and provided a startling insight into the level and diversity of projects being undertaken by communities across the country.

Entrants from last year are encouraged to take part in this year's competition.

An article by Sir Roy Strong, together with an entry form and the full criteria for nominations, will be published in the 17th December issue of Country Life to launch the award. An online version of the article and entry form, together with details of last year's award, will be available at www.countrylife.co.uk/villagechurch

For more information, please contact Susannah Glynn at
susannah_glynn@freelance.ipcmedia.com

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Centre puts the Spring into Springfield' says Archbishop of Canterbury

18 November 2008

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams visited Birmingham and the Black Country last weekend (15th and 16th November) where he opened a Children's Centre, visited a Hindu Temple, met the city's Faith Leaders Group and preached at Birmingham Cathedral.

On Saturday 15th November Dr Williams officially opened The Springfield Centre at St Christopher's Church, Springfield, and met with parents, children, staff and volunteers from the Centre. You can watch the Midlands Today coverage of the visit
<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=0aSdfMNCAU>

The Archbishop said: "The Springfield Centre is a further example of the Church of England's Presence & Engagement programme, which emphasises the positive contribution of parish churches in multi religious neighbourhoods."

The Springfield Centre has grown out of the work of The Springfield Project, a community project established in 2000 by St Christopher's Church, a local parish church in a multi cultural neighbourhood. The new £2m Centre was primarily financed and built by Birmingham City Council as the home of the Springfield Children's Centre, a 'one stop shop' provision for families with children under the age of five.

The Archbishop joined members of the congregation and others from the local community in the church, where he took part in a Service of Thanksgiving and gave a homily. After a ribbon-cutting ceremony the Archbishop joined with children to create a plaque made of handprints to celebrate the opening of the centre. He also met 8-13 year-olds from an after-school project who have written a rap for the occasion, parents and children who access the Family Support service, members of Seedlings Stay and Play group and children and families who attend Mini Springers Nursery.

During his visit the Archbishop also met Dr Andrew Smith, leader of the Youth Encounter Centre which trains Christian youth workers based in multi faith settings.

Speaking at the Church Service the Archbishop said: "Springfield is the name of the town in one of my favourite TV shows, the Simpsons. On the programme there is a song about putting the spring into

Springfield. This place is putting the spring into Springfield. It is not just creating a buzz but is also a source of new life."

The Archbishop then visited the Venkataswara (Balaji) Temple, in the Diocese of Lichfield, where he unveiled a plaque to commemorate his visit and the friendship between Christian and Hindu communities in the United Kingdom. His Excellency Mr. Shiv Kumar Mukherjee, High Commissioner of India was amongst the distinguished guests, who also included representatives from major Faiths in the United Kingdom.

The Archbishop was welcomed in the traditional way and was shown around the interior of the temple where he met with members of the temple community. Dr Williams did not engage in any religious ceremonies while at the Temple. In his recent Diwali message the Archbishop said; "I warmly welcome the invitation by the Trustees of the Temple, and at this time of year my visit will carry particular significance. My hope for this year ahead is that in the spirit of looking to the light, we shall be able to find reconciliation where there has been division and hurt and work for peace and the rejection of all resort to violence."

The Bishop of Birmingham presided at the Eucharist in Birmingham Cathedral on Sunday morning at which the Archbishop preached. The Gospel reading for the day was the parable of the talents in Matthew Chapter 25 vs 14-30. The Archbishop said that it was not a parable about economics but the talents represented God's offer of relationship.

He said: "God does not give us stuff.... We don't have a series of packages descending from heaven labelled 'love from God'. You have something much better - which is the love of God." He went on to say while we can be inclined to lock that relationship in a cupboard we become alive by following the example of our master in reckless self-giving.

The Archbishop concluded by saying that Matthew 25 could be summarised as saying, keep your eyes open, don't be afraid and what you'll find you are doing is serving Jesus, particularly among the marginalised and needy in the world.

The Bishop of Birmingham, Rt Revd David Urquhart, said "I was delighted to welcome the Archbishop to the city and join him as he visits the region. There is much to celebrate in this city and region of faiths where God is taken seriously and faith communities listen, respect and appreciate each other".

To see the Archbishop's address to faith leaders, please click [here](#).

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Buy British this Christmas

12 November 2008

As part of a greener Advent and Christmas this year please think about buying British food. As well as supporting the rural economy you will be cutting down on fuel miles and encouraging better animal welfare standards. And the food tastes great too!

Matthew Rhodes
Rural Ministry Officer

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Two new mission booklets from ReSource

12 November 2008

We are finding increasingly that we are being invited to work both with mission partnerships and groupings, and with individual churches to provide support and training for mission. To help meet this need we have just published two new ReSource booklets.

The first booklet, *Stay Evangelism*, is written to encourage ordinary Christians to develop a transparent and friendly lifestyle which makes it possible to share their faith unthreateningly and in a servant-hearted way with others. The second, *Decision*, is for those who are thinking of making a step of commitment, and is ideal for use with Alpha or in the context of parish missions and outreach events. Both booklets are written with a fresh and unthreatening approach, and have been warmly welcomed by dioceses and local churches across the country as a significant new contribution to the resources currently available for mission.

Stay Evangelism costs £3; *Decision* is £2 or £10 for a pack of 10. Both are available through www.resource-arm.net.

ReSource works with dioceses, deaneries and parishes to support the mission and ministry of the church. If you would like more information about how we can help you please visit our website, www.resource-arm.net, or contact us on 01749 672860.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Four new titles from BRF

12 November 2008

Please see below information about four new titles from BRF to be

published in the New Year (2009).

Good Enough Mother - God at work in the challenge of parenting - Naomi Starkey is not a 'how to parent' book, but one that explores the emotional and spiritual side of mothering. Looking at a number of challenges common to many mothers' experience, it considers how God can be at work even in the most discouraging situations. Ideal for churches to give to mothers

40 days with Paul - Henry Wansbrough brings together 40 undated Bible passages, with commentary, all focusing on Paul's letters. Well suited for the Lenten season but could be read and enjoyed year round. 40 Days with Paul is published to coincide with the Year of Paul (28 June 2008 - 27 June 2009). Ideal for both new and established Christians

Ready to Lead - Growing Leaders - Youth Edition - Ruth Hassall is for church going teenagers, taking a fresh, accessible approach to teenage leadership. Linked to the CPAS course of the same name, this book works as a stand-alone book as well as an accompaniment to the teen leadership programme, based around the letters of Timothy. Ideal for churches to give out to teenage leaders

Growing Young Leaders - A practical guide to mentoring teens - Ruth Hassall offers practical guidance to those who feel called to mentoring 13 to 18-year-olds in a faith context, with a view to nurturing them towards leadership roles. Linked to CPAS's course Growing Leaders - Youth Edition, it also works as a stand-alone resource. Ideal for churches to give out to youth leaders

For details visit: www.brf.org.uk email: enquiries@brf.org.uk
Telephone: 01865 319700

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Adding your Christmas and advent services on A Church Near You website

10 November 2008

If you were with A Church Near You last year you may remember that they provided a quick and reasonably simple way of adding all your christmas and advent services in one go.

If you would like to try this service please download this file:
<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/christmas.csv> or
<http://www.achurchnearyou.com/christmas.xls> - Add in the details for your services - Delete the sample rows - Save it! - Email it to: christmas@achurchnearyou.com It will help if you can send it back as either a csv or Excel (xls) file.

- This form is only for "one off" events and cannot be used to add regular events.

- Each event you add must have a date and a time.
- The date and time must be entered in a standard date format e.g. YYYY-MM-DD so: 2008-12-25 NOT: "25th Dec 08" and definitely NOT: "Christmas Day"
- Likewise times must also be entered in the 24hour form HH:MM e.g. 09:30 NOT 9.30 am and NOT "after breakfast"
- You must include your church's venue number (find it on the control panel for your church)
- You must include your username (what you log in with)

If you get these details wrong then you may find your services listed incorrectly or not at all. If you find there is a problem then please log in and edit the event rather than contacting us. Please use the forum <http://www.achurchnearyou.com/admin/forum/> for queries about adding and updating your church's information on A Church Near You. We'll update the services within a week. But we cannot contact you so please check the site periodically.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Education Sunday is 8th February 2009

10 November 2008

For well over a hundred years there has been an annual recognition of Education Sunday in England and Wales. It is a national day of prayer and celebration for everyone in the world of education.

This is an opportunity for Churches to involve there local schools on a Sunday. The national society has produced some material for this based around the environmental theme "Gods world is a gift on trust". This can be found on www.educationsunday.org

If you would like any support please get in touch with the Education Department at the Diocese, tel: 0121 426 0400.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Bishop on Birmingham Waste Paper Trail

10 November 2008

The Bishop of Birmingham is set to follow a waste paper trail on Friday 21st November as he joins recycling crews to find out the ultimate destination of the contents of his blue recycling box.

Bishop David will be travelling from St Peter's CE Junior School in Harborne, next door to the Bishop's home, to the recycling mill at Nechells with a team of recyclers from the City Council's Fleet and Waste Management team. When he reaches the Smurfitt Kappa mill he will have a tour of the paper mill.

The waste paper trail marks the launch of Diocesan initiative to make Christmas greener. The following week the Bishop will be leading pilgrims to the city centre after a short service at Lifford Lane household recycling centre in Kings Norton. Pilgrims are being urged to travel to the city and give away all the goods in their homes that they have never used, are in top quality condition and would be appreciated as a present by someone else.

The Rt Revd David Urquhart, Bishop of Birmingham, said: "We are asking people to stop before they shop and think of imaginative ways of celebrating Christmas this year. Most of us have unused gifts or mistake-buys at home that could make a great gift for someone else such as a DVD, a once-read book, an unwanted toy or unopened toiletries. Others of us could give a gift we have made - a photograph, a cake or a painting. Or perhaps a gift of time for close friends and family member such as a babysitting voucher, a dinner out or some help in the garden for a neighbour.

"Disposing of waste is a serious challenge in a city the size of Birmingham. Ever since I have arrived I have been impressed how efficiently my rubbish has been collected from my home and I have been curious to know what happens to the waste I have left ready to be recycled. I am looking forward to touring the mill and hearing how Birmingham is developing as a green city."

Dave Green, Acting Assistant Director for the Council's Fleet & Waste Management said "We are delighted to be able to be supporting the Bishop of Birmingham's Big Green Give-Away and thanks to our recycling partners Smurfit Kappa Paper Recycling we are able to give the Bishop an insight into what happens to his recycling once the crews have picked it up. It also helps to remind the householders of the City that it is not just the Christmas TV magazines that can be recycled - we will take wrapping paper, cards and toy boxes as well".

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Can you give career talks to schools?

10 November 2008

Growing Ambitions are keen to get Christians in the workplace - UK-wide - interested in volunteering to give a half-hour talk about their career to young people near them. They are a not-for-profit organisation.

Careers advisers in schools, colleges and universities are often under-resourced and are looking for speakers to invite in to speak to young people, and help them make informed career choices. Volunteering in this way is a great 'low key' way for Christians to impact young people. Of course, we know that we carry the Holy Spirit with us wherever we go and that he has a transforming influence, even if we are there to speak about our jobs. Growing Ambitions invite people from over 800 career types and from every community in the UK to

get involved, visit: http://www.transformworkuk.org/Groups/83900/Transform_Work_UK/Networking/Make_A_Difference/Make_A_Difference.aspx

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Celebrating Age in Worship - Suggestions and Resources

07 November 2008

A new practical publication from The Leveson Centre

Are you planning a service for or about older people? Do you want suggestions for hymns, prayers and readings (biblical and non-biblical)? Would you find it useful to have three addresses on ageing by distinguished speakers?

If so, this publication could be exactly what you need. At its core are three addresses given at services in celebration of age by Richard Harries, then Bishop of Oxford, Ronald Blythe, well-known author and columnist for The Church Times, and John Sentamu, then Bishop of Birmingham. These suggest themes that can be taken up when celebrating age in worship as well as providing a fund of useful quotations and illustrations.

This paper costs £4.00 including postage and packing. Orders enclosing a cheque payable to The Foundation of Lady Katherine Leveson should be sent to the address below. Alternatively copies can be ordered on line using a credit card on our website www.levesoncentre.org.uk

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Michael Counsell's Oberammergau Guidebook

07 November 2008

A revised and updated edition of Every Pilgrim's Guide to Oberammergau and its Passion Play, by Michael Counsell, has just been published by Canterbury Press.

This pretty Bavarian village re-enacts the events of the last week of Jesus' life every ten years. This is a complete guide to the history and content of the Play; extensive visitor information on what to see in Oberammergau, nearby places of interest, maps and a street plan, a language guide and a selection of photographs, and a collection of appropriate prayers and hymns.

You can order it through your local bookshop or buy it direct from www.canterburypress.co.uk Every Pilgrim's Guide to Oberammergau

and its Passion Play, by Michael Counsell, is published by Canterbury Press, Norwich, ISBN 978-1-85311-891-3 at £9.99

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Junk room in Malawi transformed into a paediatric ward

06 November 2008

Like Pied Pipers, a team of 11 volunteers – aged 15 to 75 – were surrounded by crowds of laughing children when they arrived in Nkope, in the Diocese of Upper Shire, Malawi – which has a Diocesan Link with Birmingham.

They were there to help refurbish a health centre at the request of local medical staff. Team leader Eileen, a reader at St Alban's Church in North Harrow, explained: 'The welcome was ecstatic. We were a bit like the Pied Piper as we walked through the village with a procession of excited children following us!

'The health centre was in a shocking state: torn mosquito netting and peeling paint. We got stuck in straight away, working with the local maintenance team. It was such a happy atmosphere, though trying to clean up with twig brushes and limited water was a challenge.

'With our Malawian friends, we transformed what was a junk room into a new paediatric ward. The newly cleaned and painted treatment rooms sparkled. As we said our goodbyes after five days, the maintenance team seemed invigorated and enthused to continue the work.'

Eileen's church has been supporting mission in Malawi for nearly 15 years; they currently support Dr Susannah Woodd, who is a missionary funded by the Anglican mission agency USPG.

Eileen, who was on her third visit to Malawi, said: 'My experiences in Malawi have shown me that mission is two-way. I have learned so much about faith and trust in Christ from the people I've met.

'Mission is no longer a matter of us, like the great Dr Livingstone, going out to foreign parts to preach the gospel. Thanks to him, and many others who sacrificed their lives, millions in that warm-hearted country are living out the gospel. Now we go as partners, not just to give our time and money but also to learn from those who have no material wealth but know how to worship with joy.'

*Mike Brooks Editor, USPG:
Anglicans in World Mission*

Photo: Volunteers (from left) Mike Fox, David Chaplain and Ben

Wilmshurst.
Credit: Bazil Arden

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Anniversary Cranmer Awards launched

06 November 2008

Details have been announced this week for the twentieth anniversary of the Prayer Book Society's annual Cranmer Awards which will involve contestants from many Church of England dioceses.

The 2009 event will be held on Ash Wednesday, 25th February at Charterhouse in the City of London. The day will begin with the Brothers' BCP service of Holy Communion with Imposition of Ashes before the finals which begin at 11am. The special guest will be staunch Prayer Book supporter and leading crime writer Baroness (PD) James of Holland Park.

The nationwide competition is open to 11-18 year olds and promotes the outstanding manual of prayer and great literary work of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. His sixteenth century Book of Common Prayer which found its richest form almost a hundred years later - in 1662 - remains the bedrock of the Church of England and the Anglican communion worldwide.

Youngsters from across the country will battle it out in regional heats across the country, organised in each diocese. The winners will then head to London for the Cranmer Awards grand finals early next year.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Ancient wall painting discovered

06 November 2008

Parishoners at St Chad's Church, Wishaw, have discovered an ancient wall painting behind a seventeenth century memorial.

St Chad's is a twelfth century church standing in fields to the east of Sutton Coldfield. The memorial, weighing around two tonnes, erected in memory of John L'isle in 1673 had become unstable and showed signs of collapse. The Church Council decided to take it down and was surprised to find a wall painting of the Lord's Prayer behind it.

The wall painting has yet to be dated but it suggests that when the L'isle memorial was put up the whole church might have been covered in similar artwork. The Revd Dr Matthew Rhodes, Vicar, said that he was very excited by the find which tells us more about the long and varied history of the church.

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

Small Advertisements

27 October 2008

Get some time away in the peace of the Lickey Hills...

Let's face it, we're all busy being busy. At Lickey Church we're taking a stand against "busy" and finding some peace, stillness and fresh air on the Lickey Hills. Finding a place for quiet retreat that's close to home and doesn't cost the earth isn't easy. So, we're doing something about it.

On the edge of the Lickey Hills Country Park—in our newly re-ordered church— you can find prayer zones themed for the seasons, comfy sofas for discussion or quiet reading, and the essential fresh coffee brewing in the Kitchen.

Need someone to pray with? To facilitate discussion? Or to pray for you over the course of the day? We can do that...

All the resources you need can be arranged for you, watch DVD's on the big screen or move some chairs for large group work... or simply do nothing! Spend some time swishing through the leaves being serenaded by song birds as you take a guided prayer walk (idyllic!). Need some lunch? We'll see what we can do, you could always walk down the hill to the pub...

Whatever you need... space to unwind... a time to talk as a team... or just a day out of the busyness... we will do our utmost to assist you, it's our mission!

For more information contact Sandra Smith at the Church Office 0121 445 1425 or lickeyoffice@btinternet.com

Request for office space

Ann Rowney (0121-333 5868) is looking for office space, ideally a site in/on which to develop an activity centre, by 2012

Lickey Church has 65 kneelers which it no longer needs.

Each one is hand tapestried to a unique design. If you are interested please contact Revd Philip Swan (Tel:0121 445 1262 Email: philipdswan@aol.com). He can send photos if required and negotiate costs (Max £10 per kneeler)

Date Posted : 01/01/1900

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Courses

Want to know the truth behind the tabloids?

Please join us for information sessions on ASYLUM ISSUES and training for BEFRIENDING asylum seekers and refugees

AFTERNOON COURSE

On Wednesdays 21st and 28th January and 4th February 2009
2.30-4.30pm at the University of Birmingham Chaplaincy,
St Francis Hall, Selly Oak, Birmingham, B15 2TT

EVENING COURSE

On Tuesdays 3rd, 10th & 24th February 2009
7.30-9.30pm
at All Saints Church, 172 Herbert Road,
Small Heath, Birmingham, B10 0PR

(NB the session on 24th is likely to be at a different venue as All Saints may not be available)

The training is offered to all those interested in becoming befrienders of asylum seekers and refugees. Anyone wishing to gather further information on asylum and refugee issues is also welcome.

Sessions focus on:

- the current situation and needs relating to asylum seekers and refugees
- the asylum application process
- how individuals and churches across the city are responding to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees
- befriending matters including motivation behind our action, boundaries, and cultural and religious sensitivity.

Befrienders and asylum seekers will share their stories.

website: www.restore-uk.org

Venue:

Cost:

Organised by:RESTORE

For more information, contact: Jeremy Thompson

Telephone: 0121 766 8764

E-mail: restorebefriend@birminghamchurches.org.uk

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Events

Holy Communion Service

03/12/2008

Date: 03 December 2008
Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 1.10 pm.

Cost:
Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:

Name: Carol Currier
 Telephone: 0121 262 1840
 E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

Music for Christmas Lunch Recital

05/12/2008

Date: 05 December 2008
Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Time: 1.10 pm.

Cost:
Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:

Name: Carol Currier
 Telephone: 0121 262 1840
 E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

Birmingham's Great Big Christmas Sing

05/12/2008

Date: 05 December 2008
Venue: St Martin in the Bullring, Birmingham

Time: 7 pm. Start your Christmas celebrations with a festive feast of favourite carols. Nader Abu Amsha, from the East Jerusalem YMCA, will transport you to another world with unique stories from Bethlehem. School choirs, gospel singers and special guests join to raise money for Christian Aid's work with the world's poorest communities. Compared by Spoz (Birmingham Poet Laureate) and accompanied by Paul Carr (internationally acclaimed organist), acts already confirmed include Harmonise Gospel Talent Competition Winner 'Zoe Uputah' and St Clare's Catholic School, Handsworth. Final acts still to be confirmed. Book via Birmingham Library Box Office, 0121 303 2323 www.birminghamboxoffice.co.uk

Cost: £10 (including Fairtrade refreshments)
Organised by: Christian Aid

For more information, contact:

Name:

Telephone:

E-mail: Birmingham@christian-aid.org**Find out what the first ever Christmas must have been like**

06/12/2008

Date: 06 December 2008**Venue:** St Alphege church in Solihull town centre

St Alphege is once again being transformed into Bethlehem. Find out what the first ever Christmas must have been like. Journey with the shepherds, the wise men, the innkeepers wife and meet Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus in the stable. "Journeys" will set off at 9.30am, 9.50am, 10.10am and 10.30am. Each trip will take about 30-40 minutes. Children will have the chance to complete a simple craft activity and refreshments will be served. If you don't have the time to take the full journey but would like to see Jesus in the manger then drop in at any time from 9.30am to 11am.

Cost:**Organised by:****For more information, contact:**

Name: Linda Hicks

Telephone: 07838 670772

E-mail:

Wholeness and Healing Service with Communion

06/12/2008

Date: 06 December 2008**Venue:** Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 9.00 am. With The Revd Canon Henry Burgess

Cost:**Organised by:** Birmingham Cathedral**For more information, contact:**

Name: Carol Currier

Telephone: 0121 262 1840

E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com**Mediaeval Baebes Illumination Christmas Concert**

06/12/2008

Date: 06 December 2008
Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 8.00 pm.

Cost:
Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:
Name: Carol Currier
Telephone: 0121 262 1840
E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

The 2008 University Carol Service
08/12/2008

Date: 08 December 2008
Venue: The Great Hall (Aston Webb)

Time: 6:15 pm. This annual event is a Christmas celebration for staff, students and families. All are welcome.

Cost:
Organised by: University Chaplains and the Department of Music

For more information, contact:
Name: Fr Nicholas Io Polito
Telephone:
E-mail: n.lopolito@bham.ac.uk

Choral Communion Service - St Philip's Singers
10/12/2008

Date: 10 December 2008
Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 1.10 pm.

Cost:
Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:
Name: Carol Currier
Telephone: 0121 262 1840
E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

Wholeness and Healing Service
11/12/2008

Date: 11 December 2008
Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 1.10 pm.

Cost:
Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:

Name: Carol Currier
 Telephone: 0121 262 1840
 E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

The Christmas Labyrinth

11/12/2008

Date: 11 December 2008
Venue: Lickey Church (top of Rose Hill, Lickey - just up the road from the Lickey Hills Visitor Centre)

Thu-Fri, 3-8pm, Sat, 11-4pm at calm...peace...quiet...reflective... ..are not four words ordinarily associated with this time of year! Come and take 'time-out' at Lickey Church this December and reflect on the real meaning of the Christmas season. Christians down the centuries have used labyrinths as a means of reflection. The Christmas Labyrinth is a walk which allows you interact with various aspects of the Christmas story. Although you don't need to book a time slot, doing so may reduce your waiting time. Developed by Matt and Mel Caldicott of St Paul's Church, Leamington Spa. www.lickeychurch.com

Cost:
Organised by: Lickey church

For more information, contact:

Name:
 Telephone: 0121 445 1425
 E-mail: lickeychurch@gmx.com

Signs of Trafficking and Responses in the West Midlands

12/12/2008

Date: 12 December 2008
Venue: Carrs Lane Church Centre, Carrs Lane, Birmingham City Centre

Time: 9.30am – 3.45pm You are invited to participate in this regional event bringing together people from a range of sectors and agencies who may come into contact with trafficked people. The event aims to: provide information about signs of trafficking to individuals and groups; examine and challenge the culture in which trafficking takes

place; develop collaboration and joint actions in response to trafficking in the West Midlands. Workshops will also take place. Please book before: 25th November 2008 with Methodist and Central Mission, 0121 233 1915 Email: centralmission@btconnect.com

Cost:

Organised by: This event is being organised and supported by a broad coalition of agencies.

For more information, contact:

Name: Stephen Willey
Telephone: 0121 767 2911
E-mail: stephen.willey@necgroup.co.uk

Youth Event - Sounds of Salvation - Ska Band

13/12/2008

Date: 13 December 2008

Venue: St Faith and St Laurence Church Harborne

Time: 7.30 - 9.30 pm. Sounds of Salvation – a reading based ska band www.soundsofsalvation.com are playing for a Youth event/ service Doors open 7pm Tickets £3 via www.myspace.com/youth_fl

Cost: £3

Organised by:

For more information, contact:

Name: Rev'd Priscilla White
Telephone: 0121 427 2410
E-mail:

Schola Christmas Recital

15/12/2008

Date: 15 December 2008

Venue: Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 1.00 pm.

Cost:

Organised by: Birmingham Cathedral

For more information, contact:

Name: Carol Currier
Telephone: 0121 262 1840
E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com

Asylum Seekers Vigil in the Churchyard

15/12/2008

Date: 15 December 2008**Venue:** Birmingham Cathedral

Start: 5.00 pm.

Cost:**Organised by:** Birmingham Cathedral**For more information, contact:**

Name: Carol Currier

Telephone: 0121 262 1840

E-mail: carol.currier@birminghamcathedral.com**Carols for the Business Community**

17/12/2008

Date: 17 December 2008**Venue:** Birmingham Cathedral, Colmore Row

Start: 1.05-1.55 pm You are warmly invited to a lunchtime carol service for those working in the city centre with a talk by Revd Chris Turner. Mince pies and mulled mora juice will be served afterwards. If further information is required contact

Cost:**Organised by:** Chaplaincy Plus**For more information, contact:**

Name: Chris Dinsdale

Telephone: 0121 236 9742

E-mail: chris.dinsdale@chaplaincyplus.org.uk**Shine - A service of praise and worship**

27/12/2008

Date: 27 December 2008**Venue:** St David's, Shenley Green

Start: 6.00 pm. Led by St David's Youth Church, for all youth and youthful orientated people of all ages and denominations! There will be a 'Bring and Share' meal after. For more details about SHINE or other St David's Youth related activities (ages 11-16) contact the Youth co-ordinator or the Vicar on (0121) 475 4874 Email: Yodellinghobo@hotmail.co.uk

Cost:

Organised by:

For more information, contact:

Name: J. A. Bevan
Telephone: 07969 311 003
E-mail:

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Vacancies

Administrative/Finance Officer - St Mark's Community Project, Smethwick

Salary: Salary £8 per hour.
Closing date for applications:12/12/2008

For further information

Contact name: Nina Rogers
Telephone: 0121 552 2176
E-mail:

Incumbent, St Michael and All Angels Bartley Green

Salary: Diocesan stipend plus housing
Closing date for applications:19/12/2008

For further information

Contact name: The Archdeacon of Birmingham
Telephone: 0121-426 0403
E-mail: archdeaconofbham@birmingham.anglican.org

Unlock Development Worker Birmingham

Salary: £7.50 per hour
Closing date for applications:09/01/2009

For further information

Contact name: Unlock National Office

Telephone: 0114 293 9060

E-mail: office@unlock-urban.org.uk

Rector, St Laurence Northfield

Salary: Diocesann stipend plus housing

Closing date for applications:23/01/2009

For further information

Contact name: Mrs Trish Long, Warden's PA, Keble College, Oxxford

Telephone: 01865 272700

E-mail: trish.long@keble.ox.ac.uk

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