

St Peter's Church

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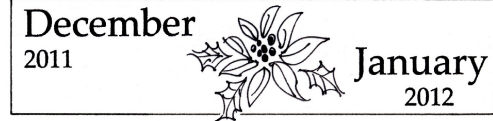
Sunday Services: 11.15am Parish Eucharist and Sunday School
[Children start in church, returning at
Communion to receive a blessing]
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace

Weekday Services:

Monday-Friday : 5.00pm Evening Prayer
Thursday: 10.30am Holy Communion

Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals by arrangement with Father Paul.

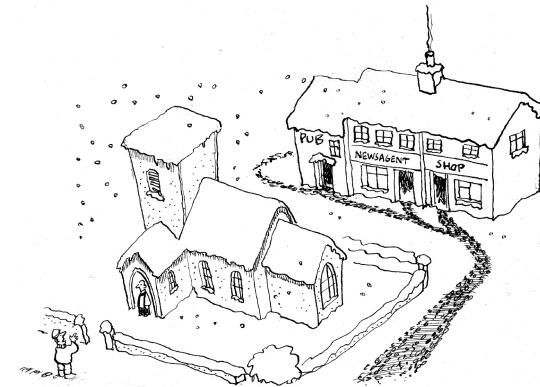
Magazine material to be sent to judy.east@blueyonder.co.uk or given to
Father Paul, please



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* from *Parish Pump*



...I am so sorry Vicar - but with all the snow this week - no-one has managed to get to church...

Diary for December and January

Sunday 4th Advent 2

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace



Tue 6th 8.00pm Advent Study Group 2 – The Sacrament of Holy Communion (Studios)

Thursday 8th Conception of the BVM

10.30 Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 11th Advent 3

11.15am Parish Eucharist *Fr Mark Speaks*
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace



Mon 12th 8.00pm PCC Meeting (Lady Chapel)

Tue 13th 8.00pm Advent Study Group 3 – The Sacrament of Confirmation

Thu 15th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 18th Advent 4

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6.30pm Carol Service *with Belsize Community Choir*



Thu 22nd 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants

Christmas Eve

6-7pm PrayerSpace at Christmas
Church is Open for young or old to say a prayer or sing a carol
11.30pm **Midnight Mass**

Christmas Day

11.15am **Christmas Family Eucharist**

Monday 26th St Stephen

Tuesday 27th St John

Wednesday 28th Holy Innocents

Thu 29th NO HOLY COMMUNION or Coffee
NO COMMUNITY CHOIR REHEARSAL



January

Sunday 1st Naming of Jesus

11.15am Parish Eucharist
NO PRAYERSPACE

Thu 5th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 8th Epiphany

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace

Thu 12th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir



Sunday 15th Epiphany 2

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace

Thu 19th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 22nd Epiphany 3

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace

Wednesday 25th Conversion of St Paul

Thu 26th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 29th Presentation of Christ in the Temple

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 - 7pm PrayerSpace



Father Paul writes:

As I write, *Advent* has quietly established itself as the Season Christians now live and breathe in until Christmas Eve. I say 'quietly', because unlike Christmas, you won't find much excitement or anticipation about Advent in the Media or the High Street; there they prefer to 'cut to the chase', get the baubles and tinsel out, and force 'the Festive Season' on us early, and long – ready or not. No wonder that for many of us Christmas loses its magic way before 25th December. People often say to clergy at this time of year, "you must be busy in the run up to Christmas". That prompts in me a mixed reaction. Firstly, I feel I'm busy most of the year, actually (like most people in fact). Secondly, what tends to keep me 'busy in the run up to Christmas' are external commitments, like those at my children's school, outside organisations who use the church building at this time of year, and then - retail pressure! What keeps me sane through all 'busyness' is the rhythm of the Church's seasons, and the prayer that goes with it, which is far more kind and gentle than those external things which drive us so frantically.

Advent is essentially a time of preparation, of making one's self receptive. It shares some of the characteristics of Lent, except that there is a quiet anticipation and excitement about it, as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. Inevitably, such preparation causes us to review our priorities, and makes us slow down – whatever's 'kicking-off' around us. Maybe this year, more than in many before, we have an incentive to do this – an 'excuse', even – to review our priorities, with so much global insecurity in the markets, and some old certainties in doubt. Advent is a blessing if we let it be so. Otherwise, Christmas so easily comes and goes, and somehow passes us by, despite our attempts to get everything in place – despite all the shopping and planning. If Advent establishes itself quietly, so did the first Christmas:

'How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven.
No ear may hear his coming; but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.'

I wish to you, your loved ones, and your friends a real breaking-in of the Glory, Peace and Good Will of Christmas, and a very Happy New Year.

Paul Nicholson

A sermon preached on Advent 1

Isaiah 64:1-9; Mark 13: 24-end

'O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter'
i.t.n...+

It's a traditional Advent theme that in the weeks before Christmas we prepare for Christ's coming, both in the sense of his birth in Bethlehem *and* of his return at what are generally called the *last things*. We've had occasion to reflect, over the last weeks, what meeting Jesus, whether at the end of our lives, or at the end of Time, or indeed in challenging times like those we live in now, might mean. *Judgement* has been a recurring and quite challenging theme in our Gospel passages from Matthew throughout the *'Kingdom Season'* that's just passed. In fact we encountered Matthew's much more elaborate version of today's parable from Mark only a few weeks ago, so I'm going to excuse myself from the task of delivering a neat explanation of that in particular.

In the 1st c. Jewish world-view *judgement* was an ever-present factor, and we hear it expressed in both today's readings, with very O.T. imagery used at the opening of that Gospel. The particular focus on God's judgement in Isaiah has a strangely contemporary feel in certain verses. The very first words read out to us today could have been uttered by anyone who was appalled and dismayed at natural disasters or terrorist atrocities of recent years, as they wondered where God was in those dreadful events: *'O that you would tear open the heavens and come*

down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence...' Parts of that first reading from Isaiah could even be describing our 21st c. culture: *'There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.'* Perhaps this text says something to us of an instinctive fear within humanity that our Creator does choose, in some capricious way, to hide from us, whether out of our unworthiness, or some other cruel reason. We may even wonder which came first – our contemporary lack of interest in religion, or God's lack of interest in us, his creatures? Here's another verse: *'But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed'* There's an implied suggestion in all this, of 'sin', or 'iniquity' – let's just call it *guilt* - being a kind of vicious spiral that perpetually condemns us to feeling abandoned, or doomed. In this sense there can be more connection than we may at first think between those ancient fears of the wrath of God and our modern insecurities – whether we just brood on them in isolation, or get as far as taking them to the analyst's couch. All these insecurities and fears expressed so vividly in Isaiah may not be so far removed from our own contemporary 'demons'.

This passage from Isaiah is part of an Israelite 'Community Lament' following the destruction of their Temple in Jerusalem in the 6th c. BC by the Babylonians. It has that wonderful honesty and painful vulnerability about it that you also find in some of the Psalms. But it affirms from the outset: From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, *who works for those who wait for him*.

As the Lament itself unfolds, the writer suddenly recollects himself, and reminds everyone of another side of the Creator that they have known, and which he now begs God to become once again: *'Yet, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter...now consider, we are all your people'*.

Some years ago there was a television documentary on the song, so much beloved of Karaoke volunteers, and (sadly) an increasingly popular track used at funerals – 'I did it my way'. It was memorable to me because it featured my old university Music Professor, the late (and eccentric)

Wilfrid Mellers, talking about the song. Many versions, including the famous one by Frank Sinatra, were played, but last of all came a complete assault on ears and eyes, as a rendering was given by Sid Vicious. Wilfrid Mellers expressed the view that actually it was 'old Sid's' interpretation that truly captured the spirit and the implication of the words of that song, that ultimately shows no care or thought for anyone but "me", nor any way but "mine". By contrast a common experience of Christians, when they go deeper into their faith, is that they come to know themselves better – in a more wholesome way because it's in relationship with God, and feel they are beginning finally to reach towards their full potential. This is the God of whom Isaiah claims that he 'works for those who wait for him'. Truly 'waiting' on God to work in our lives is akin to that analogy Isaiah makes – we are the clay, and God our Father and Creator is the potter, who can mould us and shape us into the people he intended us to become. Far from God hiding his face from us, he calls us into fellowship with him through his Son, and our faith teaches us that, through the victory of Jesus over death, our lives do have an eternal dimension. About 'the last things' *'the day or hour'* even Mark finally says *'no one knows'*, but the insistence that we should *'keep alert'* and awake surely has a lot to do with our willingness to be moulded into Christ's likeness – as today's collect puts it - **'now, in the time of this mortal life'**.

Paul Nicholson



Keeping St Peter's Boat Afloat

As I write I am told that our modest Winter Fair raised £555. Thank you to all who helped to make it such a success. The Summer Fair raised £700, so we have worked hard to get much needed funds for all the expenses here at St Peter's. It is also gratifying that on both occasions many members of the community came and there was a happy and friendly atmosphere.

So – what more can we do to raise money and to maintain a high profile for the church in the community? As always, we had many books and a lot of bric-a-brac over from the last fair. Could we have a coffee morning in the New Year and sell everything at £1 or under? We would shift some things that way and perhaps the idea of a bargain would attract a lot of people to part with a small sum, which for us might become a large one.

Could we hold a Silent Auction? In this members of the congregation would be invited to offer their skills: to make a casserole/cake; give a language lesson/ computer lesson/music lesson; do an hour's ironing/ cleaning/ shopping/gardening; take someone for a drive with afternoon tea at the end of it, etc, etc. Think what gifts you have and what you could offer. A list of these is then distributed and offers made. If you want to make an offer for one of these things, you write your name and the price you are offering on a piece of paper and put it in a sealed envelope with the item written on the front. On a set date the envelopes are opened and the highest bidder automatically gets what they have bid for. We could take a few weeks over this, say, collect the offers of gifts for one month, collect the bids for 2 weeks and then Paul could open the envelopes the following Sunday at coffee.

What else could we do? A quiz night? A sponsored something? A lecture by a prominent person for which we would charge entrance? A concert? A Desert Island Discs/Books evening with members of the congregation?

Please think what we can do to keep up the impetus of fund-raising and community involvement and let Paul or the churchwardens or me have your ideas.

Mary Shakeshaft

University of Protest

“Descent into chaos” screamed the Evening Standard headlines, but that is not what I found. I had seen on television that the Wall Street occupation was being ended by force without notice. Unless I got to St Paul’s now, there might be nobody left. The protesters were not obstructing entry to the Cathedral or molesting visitors or worshippers. Fire access was left clear. I saw no booze. The only people being harangued by megaphone were two stolidly impartial City of London Police. The campers will need a good deal of goodwill and tolerance to live together in such cramped conditions. They will also need more and better toilets.

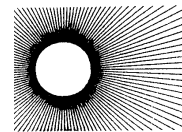
Views expressed in notices and placards were varied, some of them way out- e.g. denunciations of Islamophobia, and “Abolish the City of London!”, but the protesters I spoke to were not hostile to the Church of England, rather regretful that it had not taken a moral stand against the excesses of Capitalism.

I attended a lecture at the ‘Tent City University’. The subject was billed as “Tar Sands Extraction” which sounded rather aridly technical. It turned out to be a moving plea by the Cree Nation of Northern Alberta against the devastation of their ancestral hunter-gathering way of life in an area four times the size of England, by pollution of the atmosphere and water supply. This is associated with increased cancers in the food chain. President Obama has imposed a moratorium on the pipeline from Alberta to Texas. A ban on the import of oil extracted by these means is coming before the European Council of Ministers with Britain’s Liberal Democrat Minister of Transport set to vote the wrong way. Questions

from the floor extended the discussion to indigenous Australians and native Columbians.. We are seeing a flowering of views suppressed by business-dominated media. Is this the birth of a new ‘University’?

How much longer have the Protesters got? They seemed to think they had about two months, but notices are apparently now being served, on whom? by whom? Then what? “We’ll go somewhere else- that’s if we’ve not been exterminated.” If they seek sanctuary inside the Cathedral, bringing their tents, their University, and their portaloos, the Diocesan Authorities, God help them, will have to decide what to do...

Bob Braithwaite



Autumn Term at the Hampstead Christian Study Centre

This term we have been meeting at St Peter’s Studios on Tuesday evenings to consider what the legacy of the Victorians has been. We began with a brilliant sweep over the century by Doris Asher, taking in the many social changes as well as the political ones, with of course a clear account of the changes in the church in the nineteenth century.

This was followed by a series of talks which focused on some of these changes. Dr Richard Barnett came from the Wellcome Institute to talk about an eccentric Scottish doctor who was interested in the links between madness in human beings and in animals, an interesting footnote to Darwin’s “Origin of the Species”, and prompting a good discussion, though we didn’t have time to explore fully the question of whether animals have souls. The next talk was given by Stephen Cornish, the Revd Claire Wilson’s brother, who has recently retired as Head of British Steam Trains, which he explained covered any out-of-the-ordinary trains in service, including the Royal train and advising on the Hogwarts Express. He gave an amusing and informative talk about the development

of the railways and what this meant in terms of communication. Dr Carmen Mangion followed with an account of the revival of monastic life and in particular the founding of a large number of Anglican Sisterhoods. These, she explained, aroused much opposition, not only because they smacked of the dreaded “papacy”, but chiefly because they threatened the power base of the father of the family. Women were now under the control of “mother superiors” and often these sisterhoods were free from diocesan jurisdiction, while the young women who joined them enjoyed a far more exciting life than they expected to have as Victorian spinsters, nursing in the slums and the mission fields and educating the young.

After a break for all Saints Day we heard from Archdeacon Bill Jacobs about the spread of London and what that meant in terms of church building and church attendance. It was rather encouraging to the church today to learn that the generally accepted view that the churches were full in Victorian days was proved by research into the archives of Lambeth Palace and the London Diocese to be a myth. We moved into the church for the next talk when Terence Atkins from the National Hymn Society celebrated Hymns Ancient and Modern which was first published 150 years ago in 1861. This was a highly entertaining talk, not least because its focus was on the tunes selected for the hymns and Paul played several of the “rejects” for us and others more well-known we sang lustily. The course ended with a talk on education given by the Revd Joanna Yates which proved to us how significant the Church’s input was, not only in the education of children with the founding of church schools all over England and Wales by the National Society, but also by its work in higher education and in teacher training.

The Spring Term will follow what has become the usual pattern of Bible Study. The Revd Stephen Tucker, the vicar of Hampstead, having tackled Mark and Matthew’s Gospels will give three lectures on Luke’s and these will be followed by two on Acts from Dr Graham Gould. The course begins on 18th January.

Mary Shakeshaft

We three kings of Orient are... what?

“A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey, in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, the very dead of winter.”

It was 1622, and the Bishop of Winchester, Launcelot Andrews, was preaching a magnificent sermon to King James I. Reckoned one of the best preachers ever, Launcelot Andrews’ words were later taken up by T S Eliot and transformed into his wonderful poem ‘The Journey of the Magi’. What a vivid picture – we can see it all! The camels’ breath steaming in the night air as the kings, in their gorgeous robes of silk and cloth-of-gold and clutching their precious gifts, kneel to adore the baby in the manger.

Yet the Bible does not give us as much detail as some people think. Tradition down the centuries has added a great deal more. For instance, we know from St Matthew that the magi were ‘wise’, or learned men of some sort, but we do not know if they were kings or not. The Bible tells us there were several; tradition has decided upon three, and even named them: Balthassar, Melchior, and Gaspar. But the Bible does tell us that the magi gave baby Jesus three highly symbolic gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. Gold stands for kingship, frankincense for worship, and myrrh for anointing – anticipating his death.

There is a lovely ancient mosaic in Ravenna, Italy, that is 1,500 years old. It depicts the wise men in oriental garb of trousers and Phrygian caps, carrying their gifts past palm trees towards the star that they followed... straight to Jesus.

From Parish Pump

The Journey of the Magi

"A cold coming we had of it,
Just the worst time of the year
For a journey, and such a long journey:
The ways deep and the weather sharp,
The very dead of winter."
And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,
Lying down in the melting snow.
There were times we regretted
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty, and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches,
With the voices singing in our ears, saying
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,
And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we lead all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.

T S Eliot

Christmas Eve

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mas. This used to be the only Mass of the year which was allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. The hour was first chosen at Rome in the fifth century to symbolise the idea that Christ was born at midnight – a mystical idea in no way hindered by historical evidence! No one knows the hour of his birth.

In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

In 1947 one British writer pointed out its “domestic convenience” : “for where there are children and no servants, husband and wife may be unable to communicate at any other time.” (Some things don’t change, then!)

The English are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents: in Germany, Sweden and Portugal the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve. But the English are ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve. And there was a time when no decorations could be brought into our church until after Evening Prayer on Christmas Eve.

Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally they were lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve until being brought into the house.

1 January - The naming of Jesus

It is Matthew and Luke who tell the story of how the angel instructed that Mary's baby was to be named Jesus*. The Church recalls the naming of Jesus on 1 January - eight days after 25 December (by the Jewish way of reckoning days). For in Jewish tradition, the male babies were circumcised and named on their eighth day of life.

For early Christians, the name of Jesus held a special significance. In Jewish tradition, names expressed aspects of personality. Jesus' name permeated his ministry, and it does so today: we are baptised in the name of Jesus (Acts 2:38), we are justified through the name of Jesus (1 Cor 6:11); and God the Father has given Jesus a name above all others (Phil 2:9). All Christian prayer is through 'Jesus Christ our Lord', and it is 'at the name of Jesus' that one day every knee shall bow.

* The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, 'Yehosua', or Joshua. Or there is the Hebrew-Aramaic form, 'Yesua'. In Greek, it became 'Ἰησοῦς' (Iesoûs), and in Latin it became 'Iesus'.

The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh delivers' or 'Yahweh rescues', or 'Yahweh is salvation'. No wonder the angel Gabriel in Luke 1:26-33 told Mary to name her baby Jesus: "because he will save his people from their sins".

All you need is love

Getting along with your fellow workers can have long-term health benefits for you, and can even increase your life-span. According to research carried out at Tel Aviv University, having a friendly work environment and a positive relationship with your colleagues can provide you with the vital emotional support you need for health.

A Prayer for Students

Grant, O Lord, to all students, to know what is worth knowing, to love what is worth loving, to praise what delights you most, to value what is precious in your sight and to reject what is evil in your eyes. Grant them true discernment to distinguish between different things. Above all, may they search out and do what is most pleasing to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

By Thomas a Kempis

A survival guide to DIY

- ~ Always take credit for miracles. If you dropped the alarm clock while taking it apart and it suddenly starts working, you have repaired it.
- ~ Regardless of what people say, kicking, pounding, and throwing sometimes DOES help.
- ~ If something looks level, it is level.
- ~ If what you've done is stupid, but it works, then it isn't stupid.

Free travel

Living on earth may be expensive, but it includes an annual free trip around the sun.

Planning policy reform? The campaign for everyday England has only just begun!

The Government consultation on planning policy reforms may have closed this autumn, but the time “to make your voice heard has only just begun!” So says Civic Voice President, Griff Rhys Jones.

Now Civic Voice, the national charity for hundreds of community-based, volunteer-led civic societies across England, is urging its 75,000 volunteers to campaign for “secure, fair planning policies which curb sprawl and promote high quality, well designed development in towns and cities.” Civic Voice argues that “Local communities have everything to lose from wrong-headed changes in planning policy which would leave everyday England bearing the brunt of damaging development. We need a fair planning system that respects community views and protects everyday places.”

Griff Rhys Jones stresses: “Nobody can afford to ignore what’s at stake. We all need to raise our voice in campaigning for the planning policies that communities need for their neighbourhoods. Working together we can make sure the local voice is heard in this nationally important debate.”

Civic Voice has identified a particular risk to “everyday England” - the local neighbourhoods, streets, buildings, green spaces, town centres and views of daily life which aren’t protected by special designations such as National Parks, green belts or listed buildings. The final NPPF is expected to be published in 2012. Civic Voice’s “call to action” is at: www.civicvoice.org.uk/fairplanning

