

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]
6.00pm PrayerSpace

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

Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals by arrangement with Father Paul.

The Gallery Choir sings at the 11.15am service and rehearses on
Thursdays at 8pm at St Saviour's, Eton Road. Details from 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*

Diary for December and January



Sunday 5th Advent 2

11.15am Parish Eucharist with The Revd
Marie-Else Bragg
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Wednesday 8th 7.30pm Confirmation and Licensing of The Revd
Mark Speeks as Assistant Priest, by the Bishop of
Edmonton

Thursday 9th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
2.15pm The Hall Junior School Carol Service
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Saturday 11th 6.00pm Cambridge Taverner Choir, directed by
Owen Rees. A service of readings and music for
Advent at *St Saviour's*

Sunday 12th Advent 3

**11.15am Parish Eucharist. Preacher: Sister Sandra
Tait**
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Thursday 16th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 19th Advent 4

11.15am Parish Eucharist with baptism of Miranda Rose
Young
6.30pm Carol Service with Belsize Community Choir

Thursday 23rd 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants

Friday 24th Christmas Eve

6.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Midnight Mass with The Revd Mark Speeks

Saturday 25th Christmas Day

11.15am Parish Eucharist



Sunday 26th Christmas 1

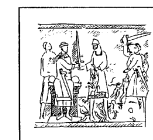
11.15am Parish Eucharist

Monday 27th *St John*

Tuesday 28th *Holy Innocents*

Wednesday 29th *Thomas Becket*

Thursday 30th No Holy Communion or coffee



Saturday 1st *Naming and Circumcision of Jesus*

Sunday 2nd Christmas 2

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace



Thursday 6th *The Feast of the Epiphany*

10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants

Sunday 9th Baptism of Christ

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 .00pm Epiphany Carol Service with visitng choir
directed by Mark Denza

Thursday 13th

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

Sunday 16th Epiphany 2

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Tuesday 18th *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins*

Thursday 21st 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir

Sunday 23rd Epiphany 3

11.15am Parish Eucharist with The Revd Mark Speeks
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace

Tuesday 25th *Conversion of Paul*

Thursday 27th 10.30am Holy Communion
11.15am Coffee and Croissants
6.45pm Belsize Community Choir



29th Jan – 6th Feb Poverty and Homelessness Action Week

www.actionweek.org.uk

Sunday 30th Presentation of Christ in the Temple [Candlemas]

11.15am Parish Eucharist
6 – 7pm PrayerSpace



Father Paul writes

Speaking of various catastrophes and tragedies that were to happen in the future, Jesus says, in Matthew's Gospel 'when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates' (Matt. 24:33) These words, and the season of Advent in general, are sometimes interpreted as ominous and brooding. But in the O.T. book of Isaiah (chapter 41), the prophet beckons the peoples to 'renew their strength', to 'approach' and 'speak', and he says, 'let us together draw near for judgement'. In ancient Palestine, civil judgements to decide over people's disagreements and grievances were heard, literally at the village gates, and so Isaiah, and - to judge from his words that The Lord himself was 'at the gates' - Jesus too, were referring to this secular model of justice. Judgement is not here some ultimatum set by an angry, tyrannical god, but a period of trial and weighing-up of evidence – a process of discernment.

People of faith often find it helpful, when they face troubling, challenging and difficult situations, to ask the question "where is God in all this?" It's a question that might puzzle others who don't have a faith perspective on life. If things are appearing to go wrong or there is suffering and, particularly tragedy, their reaction is more likely to be, "what's God got to do with it? Surely no God of love would allow this to happen in the first place".

But the theme "Where is God?" is one that arises time and again in the ancient Hebrew Psalms. 'God, why are you so far from me....why do you hide your face from me...why have you forsaken me?' Opposing any notion that our bearing towards our Creator must only be one of worship, or repentance, or mousy respectability, these psalms show a passionate wish that God should be **real** to their writers in all areas of their lives, and a refusal to accept that there will be any corner of their experience in which God is not present – even at times when it feels otherwise.

When an answer to the question 'Where is God in this situation?' comes, it often challenges us out of our safe assumptions, and requires us to

change our attitudes. God turns out to be where we were not looking – pointing us in other directions.

If we truly seek ‘where God is’ in the different situations we find ourselves in, we are doing what Isaiah and Jesus refer to: going out, metaphorically, to meet him at the gate of judgement. That is the process of trial and discernment we commit ourselves to with special emphasis in this expectant season of Advent. Much of the language around Advent may sound a little forbidding, but the important thing Jesus stresses is that we should **‘keep awake’** – fully attentive to what God may be saying to us. That would seem to lie behind some of the warnings of Paul’s letter to the Romans. Rather than dulling our awareness through ‘drunkenness, debauchery and licentiousness, quarrelling and jealousy’ – rather than gratifying the easy inclinations we naturally gravitate to if we don’t give Christ a central place in our life - Paul also says **‘now is the moment to wake from sleep’**. This is true for us each personally, but also as a church together as well. As our Stewardship Campaign reaches its culmination, ‘waking from sleep’ may give us fresh inspiration in how to commit ourselves anew to making St Peter’s Church truly available and relevant to Belsize Park in the 21st century – through considered financial support and imaginative, generous use of our time and talents.

Advent is a new beginning, a time of excitement and expectation, with the annual celebration of Our Lord’s birth just round the corner, and the reminder that our final destiny is with him. As Paul says:

...salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. *Romans 13:11-12*

Paul Nicholson

Stewardship Campaign 2010

We have seen change and transformation since our last Stewardship Campaign in 2007. Our Halls have now been renovated, and are maintained, by The Central School of Speech and Drama in return for regular use by them - under a 15 year Lease - as well as by us, by fellow Ethiopian and Columbian Christians, and by other occasional hirers. Last year saw St Peter’s 150th Anniversary, with a number of public events, talks, and concerts to mark it. Recently, we have been remodelling some of our weekday and Sunday activities and worship towards the wider community – the most obvious example of this being the newly formed *Belsize Community Choir*.

All this reminds us that in recent years our profile in the community has risen. We always had, and still have, those who appreciate the peace of our church garden and, for example, have helped to raise funds for the repair of the tower clock. Now we have still more people who, for one reason or another, feel that they have a stake in St Peter’s and wish to see it flourish. We hope that this wider pool of friends – as well as our more regular members and worshippers – will want to ensure the future of our church, and contribute in any way they can.

You will be aware that St Peter’s already shares me with another church: I am also Priest-in-Charge of St Saviour’s, Eton Road, NW3. This situation came about because neither church could support one priest alone. The truth is that though St Peter’s giving has increased to a larger proportion of the cost of employing and housing me, it is still a long way from paying its ‘half’ of my post. This doesn’t cause me any hardship personally, but does mean that a few larger or wealthier churches are effectively taking a good deal of the strain, through the ‘Common Fund’ to which we all contribute. In the financial climate we face at the moment, our Diocese now - more than ever - has to keep a watchful eye on the future viability of individual parishes like ours.

My hunch is that the willingness and the cheerful spirit already being shown by an increasing number of volunteers in the church community is indicative that there is a real commitment to the flourishing of St Peter's distinctive presence in Belsize Park. If this is true of you, would you consider whether you can commit to regular financial giving, or to other contributions, in time and use of your gifts, that you can make to our community and the church's upkeep? Whether you make regular, or one-off gifts of money, please do *Gift Aid* any contributions you make if you are a taxpayer. This is a direct way of ensuring an increase in the value of your giving, even without upping your commitment.

Notes from my friends Guy Daines, our Treasurer, offering a more detailed financial picture, and Church Warden, Stefanie Cetin, suggesting other possible areas of voluntary help and assistance, are available. There are also a variety of forms (including Gift Aid) intended to help you to make a definite commitment.

If you are not a churchgoer but would like to respond to this appeal in a more personal way, my address is St Saviour's Vicarage, 30 Eton Villas, NW3 4SQ, and if you need them, St Peter's Bank details are: Acct. No. 01062573 and Sort Code 40-01-15

Wishing you every blessing,

Paul Nicholson
Priest-in-Charge

Monday 17th January: Hampstead Council for Christians and Jews
7.45 for 8pm Isaiah's Servant Texts: Jewish and Christian Interpretations.
Sr Patricia Harriss and Rabbi Rachel Montagu: Contribution £4 (CCJ Members £3) Includes refreshments. [Venue to be confirmed] Details from rachel@gm.apc.org

The Wasteful Manager - Sermon

Although the parable is familiar – or at least the conclusion is - I had to read and re-read the details of Jesus' several times before I could make sense of it. A manager is to be fired from his job because he was wasting the assets under his control. Knowing this – and not challenging the reason for being fired - he uses those assets, which obviously don't belong to him, to buy the future favours of others. The wasteful manager becomes a dishonest manager and his actions make his master's debtors equally dishonest, guilty of the further charge of stealing from his master. All very clever; all part of the manager's strategy to secure his future after he leaves the master's house. What is surprising is that the master commends the manager's actions as being shrewd. We don't know how the master learnt of the manager's criminal activity or if the master changes his mind and retains the manager's services because of it. Indeed, the master's approach to all this is perplexing. The parable is then summed up illogically. Jesus says that "whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much". By any common understanding of English, the sentence makes no sense. Surely whoever is faithful in very little is indeed faithful in very little. Surely it makes more sense to say that if you are faithful with what is not your own, then, being trustworthy with others' monies, others will trust you more – which is the exact opposite of the parable. The passage ends with the statement that you cannot serve God and wealth. Again, this sentence on its own is patently untrue. Wealth is not necessarily contrary to God. Does not the wise management of the assets of the Church Commissioners further the mission of the Church? Does not the prudent harvesting of charitable funds mean that their charitable objectives continue into the future? Is there not also the parable of the talents when the wise steward invested profitably the funds given him and received his master's thanks?

What then is going on? It seems to me that the key to understanding this parable is to accept that we don't yet live in the kingdom of God but in a created world that has fallen into sin. This means, of course, that

everyone and everything is contaminated by sin. Indeed, as Paul says, if we say that we are without sin, then we deceive ourselves. The problem then is that our every action is also contaminated with sin. How then can we use this sow's ear of a material life to find our way to salvation? Clearly, we can't step outside the material world. Some would advocate that we retreat from the material world – but we can't retreat entirely from ourselves. We can't escape what we are: finite, limited, sinful humanity.

What then if the master or the rich man is indeed God? What then if the manager who is squandering the master's property describes the moment when humanity is being pushed out into the world from the original Eden. Could it be that the manager continues to use his master's wealth to secure his future? Are we not using the grace that flows inexhaustibly from God, grace that flows from the act of creation and which became a torrent from the resurrection, to secure our own salvation? Isn't that the only way to gain a welcome in to the eternal home, the new Jerusalem?

If that is the way to understand this parable, then Jesus' words in summary also begin to make sense. We can't be faithful in much. We don't have it within us to be faithful in much. But thank God that God doesn't expect much from us. Indeed, he knows that we have to use what we are given in this world, the dishonest wealth referred to in the reading, as the only material with which to demonstrate that we *want* to be faithful, that we *want* to be honest – not that we either are or could be. Unfortunately faithfulness and honesty in the searching bright divine light of our master is not something that we can do.

The wonder of our faith is that a little, a contaminated little, is all that is required. Of course, we should and must do our best, but it isn't a superhuman effort or an unrealistic expectation. It is grounded in God's obvious knowledge of his creatures. In that there is a great deal of comfort. Our God is a good God; not a tyrant but an accepting, understanding God.

What then of that last pithy sentence which seems to condemn the church and the Western World's whole economic enterprise?

It has to be seen in the light of the parable. The manager is praised by the master for using what he had at hand in order to achieve the goal of being welcomed in to the eternal homes. In other words, God praised the sinner for not giving up; God praised the sinner (you and me) for grappling with the world, making the most of the world, and still doing what could be done to win an eternal home. Surely it is the objective that really counts? Indeed, we can't serve two masters equally but it is inevitable part of this world that we often – and must, if you accept my analysis of the parable – use the world, use wealth, to serve God, to promote the good over the bad. We accept of course that there is a natural hierarchy: we should love God and seek to serve him first – but we can only do so from our position as earthly sinners. In the words of the parable, we are faithful in very little. And the only way to serve God is through the material world, the wealth of our bodies and minds, the wealth of beautiful objects and buildings, the wealth of nature and creation.

Is that a Jesuitical cop-out? Does wealth necessarily mean the City and oodles of money? I don't think so. But if so, what do we see when we see Bill Gates and Microsoft. We see a company that has revolutionised the way society works – for the better. We also see a man who has devoted much of his wealth to supporting charitable aims and who has pledged all his wealth to charity on his death. Is he serving wealth or God? Can it be as black and white as that when his God-given gift may be to create wealth which provides higher standards of living to so many? I am sure that some do place wealth above God and that is surely wrong. And surely it is wrong to serve God and wealth equally, but our parable is about using the wealth around us to secure our salvation and serve God.

The riches of heaven can barely be understood, but they will be ours. The glory is that it is given into our hands for so very little. The glory is that we can squander God's grace and love for us as much as we like so long as we find our way to Him. In the words of Jesus, this time from the Gospel of

Matthew, "ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you

Revd Mark Speaks

Belsize Community Choir

Congratulations to the Belsize Community Choir on their very successful Benefit Concert in support of Practical Action and Kids Company on Friday 12 November! Besides being an excellent first performance for the choir, there was a good size audience and £167 was raised. A special thank you to our guest performers - Helen Garrison (soprano), Fr. Paul Nicholson (organ) and David Moore (organ). Thank you also to Lucinda O'Donovan for all of the logistics work to ensure the concert flowed smoothly. A very successful concert and evening!



The Belsize Community Choir is now preparing for and looking forward to the Carol Services at both St. Peter's Church and St. Saviour's Church on Sunday 19 December. If you are interested in joining us after Christmas, we will be accepting new members again in the New Year and would be very happy to welcome you into our community!

The Belsize Community Choir wishes to thank the congregations of St. Peter's Church and St. Saviour's Church for their support of this community outreach project. Additionally, thank you to Fr. Paul for his vision for the choir and working to ensure foundations were laid to make it successful.

Dwayne Engh

Saturday 11th December

Primrose Hill Designer Sale at St Mary's Primrose Hill.

Admission £1

- 10am-6pm Over 30 designers. Great ideas for Christmas - from tableware to children's wear, cushions to candlesticks, silver jewelry to nearly new designer clothes and much more. Bargain prices and all under one roof. Refreshments including Fairtrade tea and coffee, soup & home-made cakes

Saturday 18 December

4.30pm Carols in the Square in Belsize village

Popular and enjoyable sing-song organised by the Belsize Residents Association. Donations and proceeds from the sale of mince pies will go to the Marie Curie Hospice.



My first weather pilgrimage

'Tim Cleverdon is a member of St Peter's, and some of you may remember his being Church Warden here, and organising the public collection for repairs to the church clock some years ago. He devotes much time to tending our compost bins, and keeping the rubbish in order in our church garden. He has a very distinct and personal Christian faith, and the vision he expresses here is one that not everyone may immediately connect with. But the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, for instance - which many of us grew up with in the C of E - originally contained prayers 'for rain', and 'for fair weather'. Should we be using such prayers now? Whatever your reaction to his article I am sure Tim would be interested to discuss them with you. I can only vouch for his absolute sincerity, and for the personal sacrifices he is making towards

realising his pilgrimage. Any correspondence or donations can be sent to me and will be passed on'

Father Paul

My first weather pilgrimage

Several of you will be familiar with stories I've told about experiences with weather over the years. I'm fortunate to have spent long enough studying all aspects of the weather for it to become a favourite subject. What's more, in recent years, I have come to understand my walk with God through experiencing the different weather he provides.

In sport and business, as well as with the ASLAN charity & St Peters, I often feel called to ask for God's blessing over the weather, to help activities run smoothly. In this context, it's fascinating to observe what happens. For example to see how, even when the weather is not what I ideally wanted, there is always some deeper meaning to be found; and often an unexpected challenge or blessing to be encountered within it.

A few years back, I felt prompted to look into all this in more detail, so alongside my other work I learnt the technical aspects of meteorology, as well as some of the spiritual dynamics. Most notably I reviewed the work of Robert Henson and Reverend Selwyn Hughes; also looking at the extraordinary lives of St Swithun of Wessex and St Genevieve from 5th century France.

My times of study coincided with the floods which hit the UK in both 2007 & 2009. There were also some difficulties in the farming industry, with which I have family connections in Kent and the South West. The events were reported extensively on BBC Radio 4's Farming Today, which you may know is preceded in the weekday schedule by the short programme Prayer for Today. There was also an in-depth report written for the government by Sir Michael Pitt & his team called "learning lessons from the 2007 floods", which I included as part of my review.

To follow this work & these events, I was prompted to write & produce a third in the series of leadership study papers "***Let's ask God to bless us all with great UK weather this year***"; It was sent to the Royal Meteorological Society (RMS), several of the Farming Today team, as well as government ministers, climate change scientists and other experts & faith groups.

Now I feel that God is calling me to witness further afield in this, and I've been prompted to ask for support in raising the basic costs of a visit to Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire and Cockermouth in Cumbria. These towns suffered during the floods, and on the one week pilgrimage, I'm hoping to meet some of the communities, businesses & religious groups, as well as to observe the affected areas first hand. Obviously an enormous amount of sensitivity is needed in such an assignment; and I am of course aware that when we have floods there are other factors involved, as well as the volume of rain & severity of the storm.

Following the generous contributions of some sponsors and friends, I only need to raise another £300 to cover the basic costs of the pilgrimage. In planning this trip, I have been advised by some intelligent, visionary people; and as a result, I hope to deepen my understanding & be able to share this in sport and with the RMS, Farming Today, Sir Michael Pitt and other institutions to the glory of God. How fantastic it would be for example if, in my lifetime, I could be involved with a "Prayer for Farming Today" and perhaps attend conferences about weather & God's blessing at the RMS, with a contemporary look at the hymn "We plough the fields and scatter."

Please talk to me about this if it's a subject you're interested in, and if you'd like to contribute or find out more. There are a few copies of the leadership study paper still available, and I'd be pleased to tell you about the experiences relating to St Peter's, our events, and of course the garden and composting projects! Thanks very much.

Tim Cleverdon

Churches help with food-bank schemes

People in the UK are going to go hungry this Christmas. That's because 12.4 million of us live below the poverty line. To help feed them, a Christian charity called The Trussell Trust has set up more than 50 food banks across the country. If you know someone who might need help, or if you would like to consider donating, please visit: www.trusselltrust.org/content/foodbank. The food boxes are often a bridge to tide people over while they wait for benefits to come through. Many clients have been made redundant – and who are simply overwhelmed with the needs of their families.

Budget cuts: churches and charities must play bigger role

Churches and Christian charities will need to play an even bigger role in the communities they serve. That's how Malcolm Hayday, chief executive of Charity Bank, recently responded to the news of cuts in public spending.

'Local churches and Christian charities already make an invaluable contribution in providing services within local communities across the UK,' said Hayday. 'However it seems the role churches and charities have to play in developing solutions to societal problems is likely to increase.' Charity Bank provides loan support to charities, community and faith groups, and is the only regulated bank that is also a registered general charity. Visit: www.charitybank.org

Give chocolate

Don't know what to buy someone you don't know all that well? Try dark chocolate. Sales of dark chocolate have rocketed by a fifth in the past five years – to about £100m annually- - ever since people found out that it is healthy for them. Medical studies have identified the health benefits of chocolate with a high cocoa content – it can reduce heart problems if eaten in moderation. People are also listening to the anti-obesity campaigns, so prefer their dark chocolate to come in small portions, not large slabs.

The Birth of Christ

If you lacked simplicity, how then
should this fall to you that midnight skies
are ashine with? God, who stormed at men,
mild in you now comes to mortal eyes.

That he's not more great - does this surprise?

What is greatness? Sweepingly his fate
cuts across all human measurings.
No star, even, has a path so straight.
Look, these coming now are great, these kings

dragging to your lap, as presents, things

which, they hold, are greater far than all.
Maybe they astound you, gifts like these -
look, though, how within your folded shawl
he excels already all one sees.

Amber, shipped across great distances,

golden ornaments and fragrant spice
such as makes the heavy senses swim:
these were pleasures over in a trice,
and regretted when their power grew dim.

But [as you will see] joy comes of him.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Pray with your shoes

Once Christmas is over we tumble into the New Year, take down the decorations and plod back to work, school or our normal routines. There's a pleasure about getting back to normality, but there's also the challenge of looking forward to what the year will bring.

Not all of us want this new year. For some of us we know it will bring separations and loss: children growing up and growing away, moving away, family and friends moving on. For some of us it brings extra work as we take on new responsibilities, study for exams, look after others. For some we have to start again; to learn to be on our own, perhaps through moving away or the loss of those we have lived with for many years and decades.

Just for this month, while you put on your shoes, ask God to be with you in the day ahead. To walk ahead of you, to be by your side and close behind you: to surround you with his presence. For it is his day that we are walking into and not ours. Let his will be done, and not ours. And then as you take your shoes off, see what you can thank God for from that day together. To help to remind you, why not leave a single shoe by the main door – that might get visitors asking too.

Listen to music – and get well

Make the most of all the musical events around this Christmas, because it will help keep you whole. In recent years music has been found to help people with many illnesses, ranging from cancer to stroke, dementia, depression and alcoholism.

Music can improve aspects of brain function and to reduce stress levels. One study even found that music can help speed up the healing process among women in hospital. Music helps regulate heartbeat and breathing rates – many believe this is because music is closely linked with the rhythms of the body. Calming music really does calm us down.

People who play in an orchestra or sing in a choir often experience a profound feeling of well-being and 'group solidarity' after a session together. So as the carols and concerts get going – make the most of them this year!

Mouse Makes

Jesus taught his disciples:
"Anyone who hears these words of mine and obeys them is like a man who built his house on rock. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, and the wind blew hard against that house, **But it did not fall, because it was built on rock.** But anyone who hears these words of mine and does not obey them is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain poured down, the rivers overflowed, the wind blew hard against that house, and it fell. **And what a terrible fall that was!**

Read this parable in Matthew 7:24-27 and Luke 6:47-49

BRICK TEMPLATE

slot

slot

slot

slot

Listen to Jesus,
Follow his ways,
To build good foundations,
Do what he says!

Can you build a strong house?
← Cut out the brick template.
Gather together all your old Christmas cards and use the template on the cards to cut out lots of 'bricks'.
Cut down slots.
Slot the bricks together to build the strongest house or tower you can!

Jan11