

THE WORD BECAME FLESH AND DWELT AMONG US

*"There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome"*

G.K. Chesterton's poem *"The House of Christmas"*, which I've quoted from above, captures well the paradox of Christmas. It's a story of weakness and vulnerability, of a child conceived amid scandal, of a homeless family whose son somehow made it possible for "all men" (and women!) to be "at home" with him. And the world, says Chesterton, was never the same again. It shouldn't be so: by any human logic this little family had no chance of affecting the course of history. The *"crazy stable"* should have been no match for the *"square stones of Rome"*, the mightiest empire the world had seen. But Rome eventually fell, yet the story of Jesus still inspires and transforms those who follow him.

The message of Chesterton's poem, and the message of the Gospels, is that this was possible because in Christ, God somehow came to us where we are. He made himself at home where we might assume he would feel out of place – not in a Temple or palace, but in a stable. That's good news now, just as it was then, because our lives can feel like *"crazy stables"* too, the last place we think God would want to be, messy places, places of brokenness and regret, or just plain humdrum. Yet God declares himself to be right at home with us. He doesn't need a Temple or a palace; a stable will do fine. As the gospel of John puts it, *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."*

I hope that you might be able to come and join us in church during Advent and Christmas. I hope that if you do, you'll catch a glimpse of God in St Peter and St Paul, Seal, and in the people who worship here. But whether you step across the threshold of a church or not the promise of God is that wherever you are, he is too. There is nowhere that is beyond his love, no one he can't be "at home" with. There isn't space to print the whole of Chesterton's poem* here, but it finishes with these lines.

"To an open house in the evening/ Home shall all men come,/ To an older place than Eden/And a taller town than Rome./ To the end of the way of the wandering star,/To the things that cannot be and that are,/ to the place where God was homeless, and all men are at home."

May we find God at home with us this Christmas and always as we hear again the story of *"the things that cannot be and that are"*, this extraordinary story of what God can do in the *"crazy stables"* of our lives.

Anne Le Bas

*You can find the whole poem at <http://tinyurl.com/yjkh3q6> if you have internet access.

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WHAT'S ON AT SEAL THIS ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS?



ADVENT BREATHING SPACE Thursdays 3/10/17 Dec 8pm

Peaceful, candlelit Communion services
for Advent

CAROL SINGING AROUND THE VILLAGE Friday 11 Dec

Gathering at 6pm in the Church hall.
Followed by refreshments in the hall.
All welcome!

Collection in aid of Crisis

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE with Holy Communion Sunday 13 Dec 10am

CAROL SERVICE Sunday 20 Dec 6.30 pm

CHRISTMAS EVE Crib Service 4 pm Midnight Mass 11.30 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY All Age Communion 10 am Christmas worship for all the family



Parish News

A celebration of Reader Ministry 13th Dec. 6.30pm Seal Church

2009 marks the 40th anniversary of the admission of women to Reader ministry. There is a long history in the church of lay people taking up various lay ministries, assisting in worship or leading services that didn't involve celebrating the Eucharist but Readers as we currently know them in the Church of England date back to the middle of the 19th century. It was only in 1969, however, that women were first allowed to lead worship and preach in church. There are now many thousands of Readers – male and female – giving service to the Church without which it would simply be impossible for us to sustain the Church's ministry in parishes.

It seemed important that we shouldn't let this opportunity to say thank you to our Readers and those in other local churches slip by and to pray for their work.

Our Evensong on Dec 13th will focus on the ministry of Readers, therefore. We have invited local Readers from other churches who are free that night to join us for the service, and there will be a celebratory glass of wine afterwards! Please do come along for the service to express your own support for this vital ministry.

Anne Le Bas.

Planned Giving

At our Parochial Church Council meeting on November 19th the Treasurer reported that the income from planned giving and other donations this year was likely to fall short of the amount he had budgeted for by several thousand pounds. Like all charities our church is suffering the effects of the recession, as people become cautious about giving, which is understandable.

I thought I should point out the anticipated shortfall, however, so that we were all aware of the situation. Seal Church, like all Church of England churches, depends on the giving of its congregation to pay not only for the upkeep of the building but also for the ministry it offers to the local community. Ultimately if we can't pay our way, like any other business, our future is threatened.

The best way to give is through our planned giving scheme, so that we have a predictable income. If you are a tax-payer and can "gift-aid" your donations that is even better.

If you would like to know more about giving to Seal Church, please contact the Treasurer, Mr Mike Harvey, 01732 547118.

Anne Le Bas

DIARY DECEMBER 2009/ JANUARY 2010		
2	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
3	Thursday	
	8 pm	Advent Breathing Space Communion
6	Sunday	Advent 2
	10 am	Holy Communion & Sunday School
	6.30pm	Evensong
9	Wednesday	
	9 am	Sevenoaks pre-prep Christmas service
	11am	Holy Communion
10	Thursday	
	8 pm	Advent Breathing Space Communion
11	Friday	
	6pm	Carol singing around the village
13	Sunday	Advent 3
	10am	Holy Communion and Christingle
	6.30 pm	Evensong to celebrate Reader ministry
15	Tuesday	
	6.30pm	Sevenoaks Prep Carol Service
16	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
17	Thursday	
	8 pm	Advent Breathing Space Communion
20	Sunday	Advent 4
	10 am	All Age worship
	11.15 am	Matins (said with hymns)
	6.30 pm	Carol Service
23	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
24	Christmas Eve	
	4 pm	Crib Service
	11.30 pm	Midnight Mass (Carols from 11pm)
25	Christmas Day	
	10 am	All Age Communion for Christmas
27	Sunday	St John the Evangelist
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evensong
30	Wednesday	
	NO 11 am COMMUNION SERVICE	
JANUARY 2010		
3	Sunday	Epiphany Sunday
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong
6	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
10	Sunday	The Baptism of Christ
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong
13	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
17	January	Epiphany 2
	10 am	All Age Worship
	11.15 am	Matins (said with hymns)
	6.30 pm	Breathing Space Holy Communion
20	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
24	Sunday	Epiphany 3
	10 am	All Age Communion
	4 -5.30pm	Messy Church for Candlemas
	6.30	Evensong
27	Wednesday	
	11am	Holy Communion
31	Sunday	Candlemas
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong

ADVENT "BREATHING SPACE"

**Thursdays 3rd, 10th and 17th
Dec at 8pm**



Quiet, contemplative, services of Holy Communion in the Lady Chapel. These candlelit services will have a short address, lots of silence, and a little recorded music. A chance to stop and re-focus amidst the busy preparations for Christmas.

LET THERE BE LIGHT...

News of recent building works!

If you have been through the churchyard after dark recently you should have noticed our smart new church path lights. These replace the old lights which had become dangerous. The new lights are linked to motion sensors in the lychgate and the porch and should come on automatically from late afternoon onwards. They turn themselves off after 10 minutes or so. For services and other events in church there is an override switch in the porch which will keep the lights on throughout the event. Sidespeople should switch on this override when they first come into church and switch it off again afterwards. We have received a number of donations, both of money and labour, to help complete this work, for which we give thanks. If anyone else would like to contribute to the cost of the lighting, their offerings would be gratefully received.

Boiler Chimney

I am also delighted to report that the work on the Boiler chimney, which was in a dangerous state, has been completed. This work has been mainly funded by a substantial grant from Cory Environmental Trust, and we are grateful for their help.

Can You Help ?

A Christian school in the Netherlands is looking to place Dutch 14-to-16-year-olds with host families for 4 nights in/around Sevenoaks.

If you can make some place available for 2 or even 3 boys/girls between 22 and 26 March 2010, please contact Pauline Zijdenbos.

£15 per student per night for accommodation and some meals(i.e. £120 up to £180).

The pupils will have a day programme in London.

This Dutch school needs to start planning its trip, so if you are interested, let Pauline know before 7 December. Tel. 01732 742432 or email ericzijdenbos@aol.com

From the Parish Registers

We entrust into God's keeping:

Sidney Woods
Brian Lawrence

Those We Support

Christian Aid

Dear All

I am now confirm that we have booked the Stag cinema for a private charity showing of the film 'High Society' on Friday 12th March in the evening. Please book this date in your diary and ensure that it is also in your church diary.

This new venture requires up-front capital outlay, but provided we fill the cinema (seats 122) we will recoup our costs and also raise a considerable sum for Christian Aid as well as have an enjoyable social evening. Tickets, which will include refreshments, will cost £10 and will be available from me.

Elsbeth (Elsbethc7-oaks@tiscali.co.uk)

Faith and Thought

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH –

Forgotten?

Gifts to buy and cards to send,
Shopping lists that never end,
Time's so short, so much to do,
There's no room for such as You.

Laden down with gifts galore

As we rush from store to store;

Who's the next one on the list?

Is there anyone we've missed?

In the corner, half forgotten,

Lies the Son of Man begotten,

Born into this world's dark night,

He offers us his gift of light.

If there's no room, will we reject him?

With hands so full, can we accept him?

Author unknown

Parish Organisations

Royal British Legion – Seal Women's Section

The AGM was held in the Village Hall on Wednesday 28th October.

It started with the parade of the Standard while the Hymn was being sung, then there was the Exhortation followed by apologies.

The President, Mrs B Arnold gave her Address, the last AGM minutes were read. President and Officers and committee stay the same.

Mrs Arnold was presented with a certificate.

We were given a talk by the British Legion.

The Standard was returned and then tea was served and the raffle drawn.

On Saturday 7th November we held a coffee morning which was very well supported. Thank you to all those who helped to make it such a success. The Service of Remembrance was held in the Church and at the war memorial in the Church Yard for the 2 minutes silence and laying of wreaths.

On the 11th they held the 2 minutes silence at 11am outside the Village Hall.

December we have our Christmas Lunch.

Pat Walking

Seal Over 60's Club

The over 60s meeting took place in Seal Village Hall on Saturday 14th November. Weather being bad attendance was down – those that came enjoyed a slide show of local views and wild flowers mainly the variety of Orchids found in this area. We followed this with tea and the raffle where we all found a lot to talk about.

B. Arnold

Seal Mothers Club

At our October meeting we had slides of the Seasons by John Coomber. On November 11th we held our meeting in the Church Hall there were only a few of us as some were away.

We had a speaker who did us a musical quiz. We had to guess the tune, the composer and which Country. It was a very good afternoon. Very many thanks to Olive for doing this for us. After our thanks to Olive tea was served and the raffle drawn.

Next month we are having Christmas Lunch at the Darent Country Club.

As from February 2010 we will be meeting in the small Hall at Kemsing Village Hall from 2.30pm to 4.30pm on the 2nd Wednesday of the month.

Looking forward to seeing you at the lunch.

Pat Walking

We Raise our Eyes

We raise our eyes in time of woe
To mountain heights above,
And think of Him who made them so,
Our saving God of love!

He watches that our feet don't slip,
E'en though the path be steep.
His hand will lift us if we trip –
For never does He sleep.

No harm shall come by day or night,
To take Him by surprise.
We'll always be within the sight
Of Father's watchful eyes.

Our lives are fully in His care
Where we may go, we're sure
His guiding hand of love is there –
Both now and evermore.

by Nigel Beeton Two for the children



CHRISTMAS CARDS

Time to write the Christmas cards again – what designs have you picked to send this year? Are they religious ones?

Look in the shops at all the different designs, traditional and modern. Through history the view of Christmas has been the same, usually Mary and the baby Jesus. But what else would you count as religious? Three Kings? The Bible doesn't say they were kings, or that there were 3, just Wise Men but it does tell us about the gifts they bought for the baby Jesus.

Do you know why there are so many robins on Christmas cards? The first postmen in Victorian times wore red and were called robins so robins were shown as delivering cards.



So which cards are religious? Think of what you write inside your Christmas cards... all of them are because of what we write inside them and post them with – love. Our love is a tiny echo of God's love for all the world.



St BATHILD: 30th January

No, I hadn't heard of her before either but Bathild, whose feast day is 30th January, had a very interesting life.

She was born in England in the 7th century and while only a young girl she was carried off by pirates and sold into slavery in France. She was bought by Erchinoald who worked for the king of the Western Franks, Clovis II.



Bathild must have been very unusual because, in time, Clovis made her his wife. When her husband died she became Regent for their son. She built monasteries and nunneries, and did all that she could to stop the slave trade which had brought her to France.

From a slave to a queen is a big step. When her son became king Bathild joined one of the nunneries she had founded. From, a slave to a queen, to a servant of God.

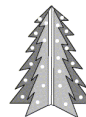
CARD or DECORATION

Here is a simple 3-D Christmas tree that you can use as a decoration or a card. You will need green card, crayons, glitter or paint, scissors and sellotape.



Fold a piece of card in half, then cut it in half. Put the 2 pieces together and fold them in half again.

Draw half a Christmas tree opposite the fold. Cut along the line and you will have 2 identical trees. Fold the trees in half, very lightly, hardly creasing the centre line to mark the centre of the tree. Cut a slit along the bottom half of the centre of one tree and along the top half of the centre of the other tree. Slip the two trees together along the slits. To help the tree to stand firmly, use sellotape to fasten the parts together where they meet.



Decorate the tree. If you are using it as a card then leave an area free of decorations so that you can write on it.



What did the werewolf write on his Christmas cards?

Best vicious of the season.

WHICH RULER

Quite a few kings and queens are mentioned in the Bible. Do you know which one is....

1. the title of the Egyptian ruler who argued with Moses?
2. the queen who visited King Solomon?
3. the shepherd boy who became a king and wrote psalms?
4. was king at the time that Jesus was born?
5. a queen who came from Phoenicia, worshipped idols and fed hundreds of pagan prophets of Baal at her table?
6. the Roman Emperor mentioned in Acts?
7. a queen who has a whole book of the Bible that tells her story?

Answers at the bottom of the page.



King Henry VIII went to heaven. St Peter said, 'Tell me, why did you have so many different wives?' Henry said, 'I like to chop and change.'



Answers: 1. pharaoh 2. Queen of Sheba 3. David 4. Herod 5. Jezebel 6. Claudius 7. Esther

Dates for the Next Issue

The February Magazine will be published on Friday 29th January 2010. All copy for that issue should be left in the basket at the back of the church or email me at a_c_chapman@hotmail.com by **Sunday 24th January 2010**