

## CHRISTMAS THROUGH A KNOTHOLE

When I was small, we had a collection of Christmas stories at home of which I was particularly fond. My favourite was a story called *"Christmas through a knothole"*. If memory serves me right, it was about an old man called Hans, a skilful woodcarver. Just before Christmas he had been arrested for hunting in the King's forest, and was imprisoned in the town jail. For two local children, this was a disaster. He had always been a substitute Grandfather to them and they were distraught that he would miss his usual Christmas with them. One day, though, they discovered a small knothole in the prison wall, and through it they were able to see Hans and talk to him. The next day, when they went back, Hans passed them, through the knothole, the slim figure of a woman, which he had carved from the firewood in his cell. The next day there was a man, then a shepherd, then a king, then an angel with a star, each one long and slim, so it would fit through the small space. Gradually Hans made a complete nativity set for the children, who were absolutely delighted.

Their mother was grateful for Hans' kindness too, and so she set to work in the kitchen. On Christmas Day the children took Hans a complete Christmas dinner – sausages, rolls, even Christmas cake – but every item as long and thin as the figures he had carved for them. Course by course, the children passed it through the knothole, and he proclaimed it was the best Christmas dinner he'd ever tasted.

Why did that story so captivate me? I've no idea – there's nothing very dramatic about it - but as an adult I still treasure it. It's a reminder that Christmas is not, in the end, about extravagant gifts or blowout meals. It begins, after all, with something as small as a child in a manger – a child born to insignificant parents, welcomed by poor shepherds and a bunch of foreign outsiders. There is no room for Jesus at the inn and it seems as if there will be no room for him in the world either. What difference can this humble birth make, a birth which carries with it the whiff of scandal too? Yet all God needs is a small space in the world; a space made by a woman and a man prepared to say Yes to his call to them, shepherds too curious to resist the invitation of the angels, and a few magi desperate enough (or daft enough) to set off across the desert in search of something new, even though they don't know what or where it might be. The prison walls of the world these people inhabit – a world of injustice and oppression – may seem impenetrable, but God finds a keyhole, a chink in the armour, and that's all it takes.

The prison walls for many this Christmas may seem just as strong – poverty, illness, bereavement, insecurity in jobs or housing, family trouble. Many will see little to celebrate, and have little to celebrate with. But joy, love and peace can find a way into our lives through the smallest of things – a moment of stillness or wonder, a kind word, a handmade card that says you are remembered, the gift of time together, or an offer of practical help. This Christmas, whatever our circumstances, let's make sure there is at least a "knothole" for God and for one another, a small space cleared in the busyness and clamour through which his gifts to us can come.

Revd Anne Le Bas

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### WHAT'S ON AT SEAL THIS ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS?

(see inside for more details)



#### MESSY CHURCH FOR ADVENT

Sunday 4 Dec

4 - 5.30pm in the church hall

#### VILLAGE CHRISTMAS EVENT

Friday 2 Dec

#### ADVENT BREATHING SPACE

Thursdays 1/8/15 Dec 8pm

#### CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

with Holy Communion

Sunday 11 Dec 10am

#### CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 18 Dec 6.30 pm

#### CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Thurs 22 Dec 7.30pm

(£10 – tickets on the door)

#### CHRISTMAS EVE

Crib Service 4 pm

Midnight Mass 11.30 pm

#### CHRISTMAS DAY

All Age Communion 10 am

(No evening service)

**Your Annual subscription of £2.00 is now due**

DIARY December 2011		
1	<b>Thursday</b>	
	8 pm	Advent Breathing Space Eucharist
2	<b>Friday</b>	
	3.15 onwards	Village Christmas event (see below)
4	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Advent 2</b>
	10 am	Holy Communion
	4-5.30pm	Messy Church in the hall
	6.30 pm	Evensong with sermon
7	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11am	Holy Communion
8	<b>Thursday</b>	
	9 am	Sevenoaks Pre-prep Carol Service
	8 pm	Advent Breathing Space Eucharist
11	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Advent 3</b>
	10 am	Christingle with Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong without sermon
14	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11am	Holy Communion
15	<b>Thursday</b>	
	6.30 pm	Sevenoaks Prep Carol Service
	8 pm	Breathing Space
16	<b>Friday</b>	
	9 am	Seal School Christmas Service
18	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Advent 4</b>
	10 am	All Age Worship
	NO Matins at 11.15	
	6.30 pm	Carol Service
21	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11am	Holy Communion
22	<b>Thursday</b>	
	7.30pm	Christmas Concert (see below)
24	<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Christmas Eve</b>
	4 pm	Crib Service
	11.30 pm	Midnight Mass (Carols from 11 pm)
25	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>
	10 am	All Age Communion
	<b>No Evening Service</b>	
28	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	<b>NO 11am Communion Service</b>	
JANUARY 2012		
1	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Christmas 2</b>
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30pm	Evensong with sermon
4	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11 am	Holy Communion
8	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Epiphany Sunday</b>
	10 am	Holy Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong without sermon
12	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11 am	Holy Communion
15	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Epiphany 2</b>
	10 am	All Age Worship
	11.15 am	Matins (said with hymns)
	6.30 pm	Breathing Space Communion
18	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11 am	Holy Communion
22	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Epiphany 3</b>
	10 am	All Age Communion
	6.30 pm	Evensong without sermon
25	<b>Wednesday</b>	
	11 am	Holy Communion
26	<b>Thursday</b>	
	8 pm	PCC
29	<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Candlemas</b>
	10 am	Holy Communion for Candlemas
	6.00 pm	<b>UNITED SERVICE AT ST LAWRENCE STONE STREET – NO EVENING SERVICE AT SEAL</b>

## MESSY CHURCH FOR ADVENT

**Sunday Dec 4**

4.00 to 5.30pm

Special Advent and Christmas activities and worship for all ages.



## ADVENT "BREATHING SPACE"

**Thursdays 1<sup>st</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>**

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.



## VILLAGE CHRISTMAS EVENT

**FRIDAY DEC 2**

**An afternoon and evening of Christmas festivities around the village**



- Starting with **Seal School Fete at 3.30pm**
- Moving on with the children in costume in procession to the Five Bells pub for **carol singing at about 5.30pm.**
- Then at **church from 6 – 9pm**, with stalls, BBQ, drink, and a very special red-coated visitor (we hope)...

Come along to join the fun at whatever time of the day you can manage. Let's hope we don't have quite as much snow and ice to contend with this year!

## CHRISTMAS CONCERT

We are delighted to welcome the Cambridge Christmas Consort, led by Florence Cooke for another concert of Christmas choral music on Thursday Dec 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7.30pm in the church.

Tickets cost £10, and can be bought on the door. On previous experience, this will be a beautiful concert, from a very talented ensemble.



## UNITED SERVICE FOR CANDLEMAS

**Sunday January 29th**

**At ST LAWRENCE, STONE STREET 6pm**

(note the earlier start time than our usual evening services.)

We will be joining the choirs and congregations of St Lawrence and St Margaret, Underiver for this special service of readings, hymns and music from our joint choirs.

Please come along to worship with our neighbouring churches for this special service.

## DIAL 2 DRIVE

### Minibus Routes

Dial 2 Drive Sevenoaks is starting minibus routes for local older people to take them shopping. The following are pilot runs; depending on demand we can amend or add extra trips in the minibuses donated to Dial 2 Drive by the Sevenoaks District Council.

The minibuses will be driven by volunteer drivers, with an escort to assist riders on and off.

**Monday** – Sevenoaks Residential Home – to Tesco's/Sainsbury's

**Tuesday** – Kemsing & Seal – to Tesco's / Sainsbury's

**Wednesday** – Sevenoaks Residential Home – to Tesco's/Sainsbury's

**Thursday** – Dunton Green & Otford – to Sainsbury's

**Friday** – Shoreham – to Sainsbury's

The minibus will pick riders up from home, take them to the shops where they can spend a few hours shopping and having a bite to eat in the supermarket cafe, and then return them home afterwards. Each return trip will cost only £5.

**The Sevenoaks Lions are kindly supporting the running of the minibus.**

Dial 2 Drive volunteer drivers are trained and ready to go. The service is for members; membership is £15 per year and benefits of membership include: minibus service, car transport to medical appointments, practical help with shopping, prescription collection, social trips and more!

For more details contact:

**Dial 2 Drive**

**Volunteer Centre Sevenoaks, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks TN13 3LE**

**01732 469000 driving@vawk.org.uk**

**www.vawk.org.uk/Transport/Dial-2-Drive**

## From the Parish Registers

**We welcome in baptism**

Maximillian Clews

## Those We Support

### The Children's Society

Jill, the mother of a young runaway, would like to thank you for helping us to reunite her with her daughter and confront their problems.

"What I really see in my child's face is the care, consideration, support and love that The Children's Society

has shown her. You have helped us as a family to move forward. To say thank you is just not enough"

## Faith and Thought

### THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH –

#### Christmas to Me

Christmas to me is nativity  
And the sound of carol-singing;  
But to others it is revelry  
And the sound of shop tills ringing.

Christmas to me is shepherds  
On a hillside attending their sheep;  
And the sound of angelic voices  
Over a town bathed in sleep

Christmas to me is the Magi  
Who put all of their faith in a star  
And in search of the little Christ child  
They willingly travelled so far.

Christmas to me is worship,  
Giving thanks for the Saviour's birth;  
But to many of the folk I know  
Christmas has no real worth.

So what will YOU see at Christmas?  
Will you think of that baby so small?  
And recognise that the love of God  
Came to earth that first Christmas of all?

*By Colin Hammacott*

#### New Year (Gal 3:29, Mt 28:20)

Jesus,  
Heir of the promise,  
Hope of the years,  
You are here.

Help us Lord,  
To know that you are *there*, too,  
Before us  
As you are behind us,  
Already in the new moment,  
The new day,  
The new year.

Help us Lord  
To delight in your company,  
To walk your safe way,  
To shine your clear light  
Of hope for the year.

*By Daphne Kitching*

## Parish Organisations

### Over 60's

The Over 60's meeting was held in Seal Village Hall on November 5<sup>th</sup>. It was well attended and everyone enjoyed the demonstration of Table decorations on a budget. Tea followed and the raffle ended the afternoon – next meeting will be the Christmas Party on December 10<sup>th</sup>.

**B Arnold**

**Social Circle**

We had a good meeting in November and welcomed some guests.

A very informative illustrated talk was given by Michael Downing on where one might find Orchids – almost anywhere in the world - & were probably around with the Dinosaurs. Size & colour of the blooms are so varied. Our speaker grows many locally, both in and out doors. We are also lucky to live in an area that has numerous wild species.

We do not meet at the URC Hall' again this year, however, we may gather for a mince pie in December. Please call (01732) 455408 or 458342

**Eileen Burgin**

**Royal British Legion – Seal Women's Section**

The Women's Section of the Royal British Legion held their AGM in Seal Village Hall on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October.

We did not have the Standard as our standard bearer was unable to be with us. The hymn was sung and the minutes silence observed. The President gave a short address and this was followed by the Chairman and the Treasurer. We have had a good year but like all organisations new members are needed. The general business followed with the committee being elected. Mr Stubbings then gave a small speech. Tea and the Raffle ended the meeting.

The next meeting is on November 23<sup>rd</sup> when Maggie Fox will tell us about her cycling to Paris for the Poppy Fund.

**Ann Butcher**

**Paper plate crafts for the Children**

**AN ANGEL APPEARS TO MARY**

**Bible Story: Luke 1.26-38**

**You will need:**

- Half a paper plate,
- coloured crayons or felt tipped pens,
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Paper doily
- Glue
- White craft foam or cardboard
- Glitter



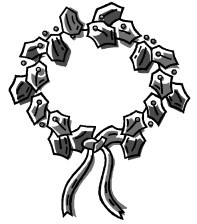
**Instructions**

Staple the edges of the half plate to make a cone shape. Draw a face and hair. Trim a paper doily to fit the angel's body and glue in place. Draw around both hands on craft foam or cardboard and cut out. Swirl glue onto each shape and sprinkle on glitter. Glue the hand shapes to the back of the angel's body for wings. Use your angel as

a table decoration or a tree-topper, or tie a thread to its head and hang it up.

**Make an advent wreath**

Take a paper plate. Cut out green holly and ivy leaf shapes from green paper and small red circles to represent berries – you could cut them from green or red sections of pictures in old magazines if you wanted to recycle! You could also add glitter or ribbons or cotton wool "snow". In the centre, draw and colour a Christmas scene or write the words "Merry Christmas". Thread a ribbon or wool through the top of your wreath and hang it on your door.



**Two For The Adults**

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**Dates for the Next Issue**

The February Magazine will be published on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2012. 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 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2012.