

The Vicar's Letter

Knowing and Growing

Advent 2010

I wonder how you measure your Christian growth. We are certainly expected and encouraged to grow in our Christian faith. Peter instructs, *'be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of the lawless and fall from your secure position.'*¹⁸ *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.'* (2 Peter 3) It's actually natural to grow, of course. If we look at the natural world things grow and develop (it's what makes gardening so hard - you just can't leave it alone). When a child is born, we expect it to grow and develop both in body and mind. Look back to when you first became a Christian and see how you have grown and developed in the faith. Our understanding, behaviour, habits all change as we develop as Christians - or they should. The problem is that we often short change ourselves and stunt our growth. So how do we know that we are growing in Christ?

The answer is sometimes difficult to get at and I'm afraid (if I'm anything to go by) we often get the answer wrong.. We can measure our growth by how we see our relationship with God and how we desire to do his will in sharing our faith with others. All too often, however, we start from the wrong point of reference. If we are not careful we measure our growth as Christians (and I'm talking about us as individuals now and not us as the body of the church here at St. Saviour's) by what we do in church. What we do in church, the service we offer to our brothers and sisters and to God is extremely important and valued, but it is not how we should measure our growth as Christians and there are three main reasons why: firstly, what we do in church does not develop our personal relationship with God, it doesn't help us know God any better. If the only thing I brought to my marriage was the odd conversation and a devotion to doing the washing up once a week it would be a pretty shaky marriage, the relationship between my wife and I wouldn't develop however devoted and good I was at washing up. Secondly, if our walk with God is based on, and measured by, what we do at church we can be crushed if at any time that task is criticised. We would see it as an attack on our spiritual walk and not that one element of it. Also, if for any reason we have to stop what we do at church there is a danger we would feel lost and apart from God. Thirdly,

there is a danger of developing a false sense of our own importance if we think that the length of time we have been coming to church and the work we do in the church measures us as Christians. We need to be humble not proud and always recognise that it is God that works in us and it's to God we give the glory.

At the moment I'm reading an old classic, 'Knowing God' by J I Packer. You may well have this book, written in 1972 and if you do can I encourage you to pick it up and read it again. It is as relevant now as it was 38 years ago. He says, '*First, we must recognise how much we lack knowledge of God. We must learn to measure ourselves, not by our knowledge about God, not by our gifts and responsibilities in the church, but by how we pray and what goes on in our hearts. Many of us, I suspect, have no idea how impoverished we are at this level. Let us ask the Lord to show us.*'

But that still leaves us with the problem of just how we measure our growth in our Christian walk. Just, 'Knowing God' is a bit abstract to say the least. I think there are a number of indicators. Firstly from J.I.Packer again:

Those who know God have great energy for God, both in how they stand up and defend the faith against unrighteousness and error and in prayer. That is in public demonstration and in private intercession. They converse with God a lot! In Daniel chapter 11 it says, 'the people who know God stand firm and take action'. That's just what we see Daniel doing when faced with unclean food, he makes a stand and is blessed for it. And when evil men hatch a plot which makes praying to foreign gods (in Daniel's case God) illegal, Daniel not only continues to pray but prays in front of an open window making it obvious. Foolhardy? No, confident because he knows God.

Those who know God have great thoughts of God. In other words they recognise God as the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Sovereign, creator, almighty and act accordingly. This is about personal holiness and a willingness to surrender self to God's will for our lives. I must say that it is no honour to God that we compartmentalise him in a pigeon hole along with all our other pigeon holes that make up what we do and what we are in life. What I mean by that is that we are very good at saying, this is

work, this is leisure, this is family and home, this is finance, this is social life and this is my Christianity and they are all kept separate. If Jesus is Lord he is Lord of everything. If God is King of kings, sovereign of all then that's just what he is, and it's completely inadequate to limit him to be sovereign on Sunday mornings but not on Monday morning at work. Those who know God have the highest regard for who he is and that has implications on everything they do.

Those who know God show great boldness for God. I love the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego and the fiery furnace. Without doubting its truth or validity I can't help reading it like it's a fun joining in sort of folk story. I can imagine Jewish mums relating this story to the kids and the kids joining in with all their toy musical instruments as they are read out time and time again. But the point of the story is one of a confidence and a knowledge of God as Saviour. They are brought before the king for refusing to pay homage, to worship this statue, and standing before Nebuchadnezzar they are bold - no matter the consequences. Our God can save us, they say, but if he does not *'we want you to know O king, that we will NOT serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up'*. You know, I think it would have been so easy for the three friends to remain anonymous in all this. 'Well what difference would it make if we went through the motions, we don't have to believe that we are worshipping the image, best not cause a stir.' They could have reasoned. Sometimes we have to cause a stir, sometimes we have to be bold against unrighteousness when we see it. We can only do that when we know God intimately and can have the strength, faith and confidence of those three men.

Those who know God have great contentment in God. Paul said, for I know who I have believed!! At funerals I often read "I am persuaded that neither life nor death nor this nor that nor anything in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." I remember once my little boy standing on the staircase at home, only five or so stairs up but for a little boy this must have been such a great height. As I held out my arms he had full confidence to launch himself at me. God is a loving Father who won't let us out of his hands, he will catch us when we fall. We can only know that from experience, from learning to know

him.

So how do I measure our growth in my Christian faith? Well it's pretty reasonable to suggest that I can measure our growth in how much I get to know God, and ultimately come to the realisation that the larger fact is that GOD KNOWS ME, completely:

I am graven on the palms of his hands
I am never out of his mind
I know him because he first knew me
He knit me together in my mothers womb.

Andy

DECEMBER PARISH DIARY

Wednesday 1st	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 2nd	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 5TH: SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion & Junior Church
	6.30 p.m.	Confirmation service at St. James's
Tuesday 7th	11.00 a.m.	Preparations for Christmas service at Crossley House Care Home
	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 8th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
	11.30 a.m.	Ings Way Lunch Day
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 9th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	3.00 p.m.	Crossley Hall School Winter Bazaar
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 12TH: THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion & Junior Church
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Tuesday 14th	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 15th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 16th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

SUNDAY 19TH: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

	9.30 a.m.	Nativity Service
	3.00 p.m.	Service of Readings and Carols
Monday 20th	6.30 p.m.	Community Carol Service, Allerton Congregational Church
Tuesday 21 st	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wed 22 nd	6.15 p.m.	Scout Group Party
Friday 24 th .	11.30 p.m.	Midnight Eucharist
Saturday 25 th	10.00 a.m.	Family Communion

SUNDAY 26TH: ST. STEPHEN/FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS

	10.30 a.m.	Said Holy Communion
	12 noon	Holy Matrimony

Confirmation Service

On Sunday 5th December at 6.30 p.m. several people from our cluster will be confirmed at a service at St. James's. Please pray for Paul Ellis, Matthew Holt and Grace Studholme from St. Saviour's, Carol Brown and Terri Brown from St. James's, and Lakhia Shantrice March and Nicole Fredericks from St. Peter's. Anyone wishing to go along to support them would be most welcome.

Flowers

Christmas is one of the times in the church's calendar when we can "go to town" with the flowers! After the austerity of Advent, when we have only the Advent Ring in church, it is wonderful to see the church come alive again with the floral displays to celebrate the birth of Christ. If you are interested in helping with these, we will be meeting on the morning of Christmas Eve - and, of course, - contributions towards the cost of the flowers would be most welcome. Please see Kaaren or Margaret.

Stamps

A gentle reminder that Val Muff is still collecting used postage stamps in aid of Leukaemia Research - so as the Christmas cards start to plop through your letterbox, please consider donating the stamps to this worthy cause. There is a container in the narthex for this purpose.

Thornton Christmas Services

In addition to the services at St. Saviour's, the following services will be held at St. James's, Thornton.

Thursday 16th	6.30 p.m.	Carols in the Bell Chapel
Sunday 19th	11.00a.m.	Nativity
	6.00 p.m.	Carol Service
Christmas Eve	4.00 p.m.	Christingle
	11.15 p.m.	First Communion of Christmas
Christmas Day	10.30 a.m.	Family Communion

46TH Bradford North Cubs

Twelve Cubs journeyed over to Hipperholme to take part in the County go-karting trials on November 13th. At the same time five Scouts were being put through their paces on a very wet and muddy cycling obstacle course. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon and we now await the results to see if we qualify to take part in the Northern Lights event next July.

Three of our Cubs were successful at the auditions for the Bradford Gang show which will be performed next March.

We were delighted to receive a cheque from Sue & John Lamb for the princely sum of £315.00 - being the amount collected at the funeral of Sue's mum Amy. Thank you.

We have also received a grant from Bradford Council with which we hope to buy a trailer for when we go on camp and pack holiday.

Some of our older Cubs are now working towards gaining their Chief Scouts Silver Award; they will attend a County Presentation event in the new year.

The District Cub Scout Games Tournament will take place in January and plans are underway for a District Camp to be held in May.

Bev Howard

GROUP SCOUT LEADER

Christmas Activities

Throughout December, there are various activities and events to celebrate the run-up to Christmas.

On Tuesday 7th the Revd. Geoff Coles will lead an informal communion service at **Crossley House Care Home**, 885 Thornton Road, with the theme of "Preparing for Christmas". They welcome visitors from the neighbourhood to share this with them and to chat with the residents afterwards and share a "cuppa".

Our monthly Ings Way Lunch Day is the following day - Wednesday 8th - from 11.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m., when a FREE warming lunch of homemade hot soup, sandwiches and biscuits (or, maybe, even a festive mince pie) can be enjoyed, along with the chance to chat to friends and be entertained by Mr. Peter Kitson at the piano. **Crossley Hall Primary School** hold their Winter Bazaar on Thursday 9th from 3.00 to 5.00 p.m. , with the chance to pick up a bargain or two.

The events the following week start on Thursday 16th December, when all are invited to the **Bell Chapel at Thornton** for carols, mince pies and mulled wine. Sunday 19th sees the **Nativity service** at 9.30 a.m.. when the children of Junior Church are joined by children from the uniformed organisations to tell the Christmas story in their own way. That same afternoon at 3.00 p.m. we will hold our **Service of Readings and Carols**, which again tells the Christmas story - followed by mince pies, mulled wine and tea or coffee in the hall.

If anyone has any voice left, Churches Together in Allerton and Fairweather Green have organised **carol singing** on the forecourt of Allerton Congregational Church at 6.30 p.m. on Monday 20th (wrap up warmly!) And that leads us to the main services over Christmas - starting with the **Midnight Eucharist** at 11.30 p.m. on Christmas Eve, led by the Revd. Chris Howson, **Family Communion on Christmas Day** at 10.00 a.m., which will hopefully be followed by a Christmas Lunch to which everyone who is attending is asked to bring some food, and a service of **Holy Communion** (said) at 10.30 a.m. on Boxing Day. Do please come and join in as many as you can.

Helpful

Whilst Sandra was stopped at a red light, the car just died. It was a busy junction, and the traffic behind her started growing. The man in the car directly behind her began beeping his horn continuously as Sandra struggled to get her car going again.

Finally she got out of her car and approached the man. "I can't get my car started," she said smiling. "Would you be so kind as to see if you can do it? While you try, I'll stay here in your car and beep your horn for you."

Why teenagers worry

One teenager was talking to another, "I'm really concerned. My father slaves away at his job so I'll never want for anything, and down the years has set aside thousands of pounds so that I can go to college. And my mother spends every day washing and ironing and cleaning up after me. She even takes care of me when I'm sick."

The other teenager said: "Sounds perfect – so what are you worried about?"

The first teenager replied: "I'm afraid that one day they might try to escape."

This Christmas...

You can learn many things from children. How much patience you have, for instance.

There are only two things a child will share willingly - communicable diseases and his mother's age.

Missing

Mother: "Bobby, last night I put two apples in this cupboard and now there is only one. How do you explain that?"

Bobby: "I expect it was so dark I couldn't see the other one."

Cold weather

"It was so cold where we were," boasted the Arctic explorer, "that the candle froze and we couldn't blow it out."

"That's nothing," said his rival. "Where we were it was so cold our words came out in chunks of ice and we had to thaw them to see what we were talking about."

Operation Christmas Child

Last month we again supported this appeal by filling shoeboxes, which we had wrapped in Christmas paper, with toys, stationery, clothing and toiletries. These boxes were then taken to a local depot to be checked, fully assembled and sent out to needy children,

In a new development, it is now possible to go online and fill a “virtual” shoebox with items chosen from a list supplied by Operation Christmas Child. The site can be found at www.operationchristmaschild.co.uk/shoeboxworld where you follow step-by-step instructions to choose the wrapping paper, the age group and sex of the child, items for the box, a personalised message for the child receiving the box and finally add your donation to cover postage costs. Workers at the depot will then assemble your box for you and send it off. There is no time deadline for this as boxes will continue to be sent after Christmas.

The online shoebox project is intended to complement the traditional wrapping, packing and sending of gift-filled shoeboxes which hundreds of thousands of children and adults from churches, schools, workplaces and community groups from around the UK get involved with each year. Last year's appeal saw nearly 1.2 million shoeboxes sent out to children in 13 countries across Africa, Eastern Europe or Central Asia. The online shoebox initiative is launched in the 20th anniversary year of Operation Christmas Child, which also sees the charity sending out an additional 15,000 shoeboxes to children affected by the earthquake in Haiti.

Christingle

The Christingle service is often held around Christmas time, but we at St. Saviour's traditionally hold it in the New Year, at Candlemas. In a new venture this year, we are joining with the other churches in Churches Together in Allerton and Fairweather Green to host an ecumenical service at St. Saviour's on Sunday 30th January at 3.00 p.m. Everyone is most welcome to come along to this enlightening service - and refreshments will be served in the hall afterwards.

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. 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, 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, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold stands for kingship, frankincense for worship, and myrrh for anointing – anticipating his death.

There is a lovely 1,500 year-old mosaic in Ravenna, Italy, which 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.

© Parish Pump

Is Rudolph the reindeer a – girl?!

Rudolph the reindeer may have a splendid bright red nose – but there is something else rather odd about him: he has antlers. And anyone who knows reindeer will tell you that Santa’s favourite reindeer cannot be male because only female reindeer have antlers at Christmas time. Two professors at Edinburgh University have found that female reindeer grow antlers in time for winter to dig in the snow to reach lichens to provide food for their young. Males, however, grow antlers only to fight with other males during the autumn mating season and cast them well before Christmas.

A Fresh Approach to Christmas

What are your plans for this Christmas? Here is one man's story...
Why is Christmas such a stressful time of year? It turns into some sort of frantic marathon that begins around mid-October. After weeks of shopping we arrive at Christmas day with precious little goodwill left for anyone!

However, it is our choice whether or not we join in the commercialism of it all - or this year consider a fresh approach.

Many years ago a Lord Mayor of the City of Swansea and his family were looking forward to Christmas lunch in the very elegant surroundings of the Mansion House. Then, out of the blue, the Lord Mayor received an invitation from the Salvation Army to help serve Christmas day lunch to the homeless of the city at their Swansea Citadel.

He recalls: "I could have declined, but decided to accept. My family supported me in this – although it meant a very belated family lunch, with two of them missing out altogether (they were nurses on shifts). But none of us regretted that Christmas, and I found serving lunch to the homeless of Swansea a very humbling and rewarding experience.

"Those gathered on that day were the homeless, rough sleepers, the elderly and those struggling with loneliness and poverty. Yet with dignity and great politeness they expressed their gratitude to the cooks and all of us who helped serve them Christmas lunch."

It made the Lord Mayor think. "Members of the Salvation Army give up every Christmas and most of the year to serve their fellow man and embrace the needy, just as Jesus did for us. When I drove away that afternoon I knew I had been privileged to have participated in sharing the real Christmas message of love and joy."

Jesus Christ came into this world to serve you and me. So what better way could there be for us celebrate the joy of his coming than by us, in our turn, showing compassion to someone in need?

Notes from the PCC

The PCC met for its regular meeting on Tuesday 16th November. Much of what was discussed was, as usual, fairly routine but an important topic - Evangelism - was on the agenda and it was noted that this very important subject rarely surfaced above the necessary though sometimes tedious business of keeping the church running. It was asked what we have done recently by way of evangelism. Advertising of Christmas services is already under way, and it was decided that in the New Year a group should get together to examine more fully how we can encourage people of the parish, make known our existence, our location and what we can offer the community. The group will report back to the PCC.

It was clear from the Worship Committee's report that our practice of giving communion before confirmation to particular people is not registered with the diocese, possibly because the regulations changed in 2006 - some time after our scheme was introduced. As it appeared that we already meet the standards expected in the 2006 regulations, Andy is to submit an application to Bishopscoft which will normalise the situation.

Arrangements for Christmas services were ratified; details can be found elsewhere in the magazine. We hope that as a service of Holy Communion is arranged for 'midnight' on Christmas Eve it will be well supported so that the tradition does not lapse again. It is intended that lunch on Christmas Day will be available as in previous years. This gives people who might be on their own on Christmas Day an opportunity for some company and fun.

Churches Together have again organised services at various venues during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and St Saviours will be host on Saturday 22nd January. We will also be at home at an ecumenical Christingle service to celebrate Candlemas on 30th January at 3.00pm. Your support will be most welcome.

Patrick Preston

Laid to Rest

Edna May Bateman

22nd November 2010

December Roll of Remembrance

3rd	Florence Baker	(1983)
4th	Ellen Ainsworth	(1937)
6th	Ellen Perkins	(1949)
7th	Sara Story	(1978)
	Emily Holmes	(1984)
	Edith Wilkinson	(1988)
9th	Doris Quin	(1993)
	George Boynton Smith	(1993)
12th	Gordon Waterworth	(1988)
14th	Alice Maud Barrett	(1961)
	Dorothy Cooper	(1974)
20th	Annie Jones	(1975)
21st	Jack Renton Newsome	(1941)
	Arthur Jackson	(1960)
	George Arthur Whiteley	(1974)
24th	Bernard Wigglesworth	(1972)
	Charlotte Harrison	(1981)
25th	Arthur Hind	(1982)
26th	Arthur Holmes	(1984)
27th	Frank Tonge	(1953)
29th	Leslie Redshaw	(2000)
30th	Irene Peck	(1993)

**ST. SAVIOUR'S PARISH CHURCH
FAIRWEATHER GREEN**

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Priest-in-
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