

The January Letter

Dear Friends,

“Behold, I make all things new.” (Revelation Ch.21 v.5)

I wonder how you feel about January? Do you feel buoyed up, excited about the start of a New Year? Have you been able to put last year behind you, and look forward with confidence to the year ahead? Or is January really bad news? Horrible weather – horrible bills to meet after Christmas – perhaps just the natural sense of a bit of a slump after a time of great celebration.

As someone who loves Advent and Christmas – and someone whose favourite season is Autumn – I sometimes have to work hard in January to remind myself that there is much still to celebrate, and to look forward to.

So what does January bring? That partly depends on how conscientiously we mark the variety in this season, especially in church terms. New Year’s Day is a time for celebration of the new, but at that point, right at the beginning of the *calendar* year, we are still celebrating the Christmas season, and will be till Epiphany on 6th January. That is the feast when we remember particularly the visit of the three Wise Men. And January is also the month when we observe the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, in fellowship with our neighbouring churches and chapels across the Christian tradition.

For some of us, the New Year brings the promise of special anniversaries to mark, special birthdays, or the anticipated fruition of special events; the year of our wedding, the birth of an expected child, the year we go to secondary school, or University. The year we graduate; the year we hope to start our first job: the year we retire from work.

At a time of change, perhaps of uncertainty about the future, it is good to allow ourselves time to reflect on the unchanging things in our life – the things we can always rely on. If we are so blessed, that can include

loving families and friends, and sharing our life with a loved one. But whether we are so blessed, or not, we can all rely on the unchanging love of God for all his people.

The Biblical quotation at the top of this letter is one of my favourites, and for me serves as a quick, silent prayer in all sorts of circumstances. Focussing on God's love and message for us is helped by selecting a theme or direction each year. Those of us in Mothers' Union will in 2015 be concentrating on a phrase from our prayer – "United in Prayer". The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity reminds us again this month through its theme – "Jesus said to her, "Give me to drink" - that living in the loving presence of God can enable us to face whatever the New Year brings, be it celebration or difficulty. And that it is our response to Jesus's invitation that leads us into that place where, in Bishop's Nick Baines' words, "we can find that we have been found by God."

A Happy and Blessed New Year!

Jean Bailey

JANUARY PARISH DIARY

<u>SUNDAY 4TH</u>		EPIPHANY
	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion (<i>Revd. Gloria Hardisty</i>)
Tuesday 6th	11.00 a.m.	Holy Communion at Crossley House
	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 7 th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion at St. James's
	6.15 p.m.	Cub Scouts
Thursday 8th	9.30 a.m.	Morning prayer
	4.30 p.m.	K:Ing's Way Club
	6.00 p.m.	Beaver Scouts
	7.30 p.m.	Scouts

<u>SUNDAY 11TH</u>		BAPTISM OF CHRIST
	10.00 a.m.	Holy Communion (<i>Revd. Dorothy Stewart</i>)
Tuesday 13th	7.30 p.m.	Adult tap dancing
Wednesday 14 th	9.30 a.m.	Holy Communion
	11.30 a.m.	Ing's Way Lunch Day

6.15 p.m. Cub Scouts
 Thursday 15th 9.30 a.m. Morning prayer
 4.30 p.m. K:Ing's Way Club
 6.00 p.m. Beaver Scouts
 7.30 p.m. Scouts

SUNDAY 18TH 2ND SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY/CHRISTINGLE

10.00 a.m. Parade Service & Holy Communion
 (Revd. Dorothy Stewart)
 12.30 Lunch and service at Allerton
 Congregational Church
 Tuesday 20th 12.00 noon Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service
 & lunch

7.30 p.m. Adult tap dancing
 7.30 p.m. PCC in vestry
 Wednesday 21st 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion at St. James's

6.15 p.m. Cub Scouts
 Thursday 22nd 9.30 a.m. Morning Prayer
 4.30 p.m. K:Ing's Way Club
 6.00 p.m. Beaver Scouts
 12.00 noon Service and lunch at Bethel Baptist Church
 7.30 p.m. Scouts

SUNDAY 25TH CONVERSION OF PAUL

10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (Revd. Dorothy Stewart)
 Tuesday 27th 7.30 p.m. Adult tap dancing
 Wednesday 28th 9.30 a.m. Holy Communion
 6.15 p.m. Cub Scouts
 Thursday 29th 9.30 a.m. Morning Prayer
 4.30 p.m. K:Ing's Way Club
 6.00 p.m. Beaver Scouts
 7.30 p.m. Scouts

25th January: St Paul - the First Christian Intellectual

Canon David Winter, Former Head of Religious Broadcasting, BBC.

On 25th January, the Church celebrates probably the most famous conversion of all. At least, what happened to a young man called Saul on the road to Damascus has become a byword for all instant conversions - what is known as a 'damascene' moment. Saul was a devout Jew, a Pharisee, a student of Gamaliel and a fierce critic of the followers of Jesus, then a very new sect on the religious scene. On his way to Damascus to organise a purge of Christians, he was blinded by a bright light and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He asked the identity of the voice, and it replied, 'Jesus, whom you are persecuting'. Stunned by the experience, he followed further instructions which led him to a Christian man in Damascus, who prayed with him. As he did, Saul's sight was restored.

The experience convinced him that Jesus - crucified in Jerusalem four or five years earlier - was in fact the Messiah and had risen from the dead. After a period of instruction, Saul was baptised and took the name by which history has recognised him, Paul. At first, some Christians were wary about the reality of his conversion, but over a period of time he was accepted and indeed eventually recognised as an 'apostle', a 'special messenger' of Jesus Christ. His intellectual stature and leadership gifts quickly marked him out, and within a few years he became a leading figure in the emerging Christian Church, preaching and founding churches all over the Middle East, largely of Gentile converts. He was eventually martyred in Rome, probably in 65AD.

Paul was the first intellectual of the Christian Church, the man who was able to set the events of the life and teaching of Jesus, and especially his death and resurrection, into a coherent theology, with its roots very clearly in the Jewish faith of his own upbringing. He's not always easy to follow. Even the New Testament admits that: 'there are some things (in his letters) hard to understand' (2 Peter 3:16). But at the same time he gave the new faith a foundation and credibility which have stood it well down the centuries.

Many people think of Paul as a rather negative, narrow misogynist, but even a quick reading of his letters actually reveals a person of great

warmth, who evoked enormous affection and devotion from others. ‘You would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me!’ he writes to the Christians at Galatia. He was, of course, a man of his time and culture, in days when women were disregarded in terms of status and leadership.

But read his letters, and see how large a role women play in them and how much scope he gave them to lead and teach in the Church. In terms of the first century, St Paul was a dangerous liberal!

I think the amazing Paul of Tarsus deserves a bit of celebrating on 25th January.

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Christingle Service

Many churches hold their Christingle service at Christmas, but at St. Saviour’s, we like to have something to look forward to in the New Year and so are holding ours on Sunday 18th January - the monthly Parade Service. It’s always a most enjoyable service, with the children thoroughly enjoying receiving their Christingles and learning about the significance of the various parts

The orange represents the world, the red ribbon represents the love of Christ and the blood he shed for us. The sweets are the symbols of God’s creation in the four seasons; the lighted candle represents Christ, the light of the world, bringing hope to people living in darkness.

At the same time, we support the Children’s Society who do such amazing work in helping children in poverty all over the world. For a few weeks before the service, there will be cardboard collecting “candles” at the back of church. Do please take one, fill it with loose change and return it to church at the service.

There is a grace of kind listening as well as a grace of kind speaking. - anon

St. Saviour's and the Parthenon.

Ian Mc Alpine.

Perhaps a rather surprising association! However, there are two links, one very surprising, between our modern church at St Saviour's and the ancient Parthenon in Athens.

Construction of the Parthenon, an immense temple dedicated to the Greek Goddess Athena, began as far back as 447 BC when the Greek Empire was at the height of its power. It was completed in 438 BC, although decoration of the building continued until 432 BC. It is the most important surviving building of Classical Greece, generally considered the culmination of the development of the Doric Order of Greek architecture. Its decorative sculptures are considered some of the high points of Greek art. The Parthenon is regarded as an enduring symbol of Ancient Greece, western civilization and one of the world's greatest cultural monuments.

However, the Parthenon has had a very chequered history over its long life, beyond the scope of this short article and has suffered terrible damage over the last 25 centuries. In the 5th century AD, the Parthenon was converted into a Christian church dedicated to the Virgin Mary. It remained as a place of Christian worship for nearly a thousand years until it was turned into a mosque in the early 1460s. And so the Parthenon was once a Christian - admittedly not an Anglican - church as St Saviour's is today. In 1687, an Ottoman ammunition dump inside the building was ignited by Venetian bombardment. The resulting explosion severely damaged the Parthenon and its sculptures.

When the Parthenon was built nearly 2,500 years ago, various blocks of stone and marble were held together by elongated iron H pins that were completely coated in lead, which protected the iron from moisture which would have caused rust. If the H pins had become rusty they would have lost their structural strength and become useless. And crucially, the iron would have expanded when it rusted, forcing apart the stones and marble which it was supposed to hold together. This is called 'spalling'. However, iron stabilizing pins added to the Parthenon in the 19th century were not coated in this way, causing serious

cracking to the ancient marble when they corroded. All new metalwork used in the Parthenon today is titanium, a strong, light, and corrosion resistant material used, among other things, to make artificial hip joints.

And this brings me to the second, less obvious link between our church and the Parthenon.

When St Saviour's was built less than 50 years ago the window frames were made from concrete reinforced with bars made of iron or steel. Over the years some of the window frames were penetrated by rainwater which rusted the reinforcing bars causing them to expand and break the frames apart. High alumina cement, widely used in the 1960s and probably used in the frames would also have contributed to the problem. And that is why some of our window frames have become so badly damaged, exposing the corroded bars inside them.

If only the church architects had taken a lesson from the people who built the Parthenon in the 5th century BC!

Murphy's Laws of Work

For success in your work throughout 2015, just remember:-

- 1 Everything can be filed under 'miscellaneous.'
- 2 To err is human; to forgive is not company policy.
- 3 Important documents that contain no errors will get lost in the post.
- 4 There's not enough time to do it right the first time, but there's always time to correct it.
- 5 If you are good, you'll be assigned all the work. If you are really good, you'll get out of it.
- 6 If it wasn't for the last minute, nothing would get done.
- 7 The longer the title, the less important the job.
- 8 Once a job is fouled up, anything done to improve it makes it worse.

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Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

As always, the week will run from 18th to 25th January and this year's theme is "The Well is Deep" and comes to us from the churches of Brazil, based on the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. For many years Brazilians were tolerant towards the various races, classes and religions in the country, but more recent troubled times have led to high levels of intolerance and violence, especially against the vulnerable and minority groups. It is acknowledged that there are limited resources available and the various religious groups are all vying with each other for coverage in the media, new members and funds.

The leaders of the various religions have recognised that they must once again treat each other with consideration, respecting diversity and trying to move forward with co-operation and dialogue, rather than aggression. It is a situation we can all relate to and we can learn from the Brazilians' example. Jesus challenges us to acknowledge that diversity is part of God's design, to approach one another in trust and to see the face of God in the face of all men and women.

Churches Together in Allerton and Fairweather Green are again organising a series of services and lunches during the week as follows:

Sunday 18th 12.30 lunch; 1pm service at Allerton Congregational Church

Tuesday 20th 12 noon service; 12.30 lunch at St. Saviour's

Thursday 22nd 12 noon service; 12.30 lunch at Bethel Baptist Church, Sandy Lane

All will be welcome at any or all of the above.

Cards and Stamps

A reminder from last month's magazine that your used Christmas cards and stamps from the envelopes can be recycled at church. Margaret Baker will re-use old Christmas cards to make new ones to go in the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes next year and Val Muff is collecting used postage stamps for Leukaemia Research. There will be boxes for both items in church. Thank You!

The Children's Society

The Children's Society boxes were opened in late November/December and I am delighted to report that the total of the boxes amounted to £251.85. This figure is considerably greater than the previous year, and on behalf of our church, I would like to thank all our box holders for their support. I have some empty house boxes awaiting "homes", so if anyone else would like a box, please have a word with me. (It's amazing how much loose change, when added together with other people's coins, can really add up, it all can make a difference.) I give below some information recently received from The Children's Society and I have also reproduced some "banner headlines" obtained from their 2015 Calendar. I shall put the Calendar on the notice board in our church hall, to share with everyone the colourful drawings, and more information about their valuable work.

The Children's Society

We improve thousands of children's lives every year.

Throughout our network of children's centres, volunteers and targeted services, we worked with over 23,000 children and young people last year, and provided intensive support to nearly 15,000 of them. This specialist help changed the stories of disadvantaged children and their families up and down the country.

We put children at the heart of our work.

We support parents so they can take care of their children.

We make sure the most basic needs of children are met.

We lead the way in keeping young runaways from harm.

We are there for children who are forced to grow up too early.

We change lives for the better.

We learn and act upon what children tell us.

We provide friendly, safe places for children and parents.

We transform the life chances of young carers.

We protect children who are at high risk of exploitation

We learn from the experiences of children living in poverty.

Thanks again for your support.

Val Muff

Remembering Sir Winston Churchill – more than an eloquent voice

Fifty years ago, on 24th January, Sir Winston Spencer Churchill died aged ninety. He was buried at Bladon church, near Blenheim Palace, the Spencer family seat. Every year hundreds of visitors still come to the grave, many of them from overseas, to remember a remarkable man and leader of men.

A soldier (in the Boer War), and then a controversial politician, he held several important offices of state, but it wasn't until 1940 that his unique gifts, both of leadership and oratory, became widely recognised. When Neville Chamberlain's government was replaced by a wartime coalition - a 'national government' - Churchill was appointed prime minister. From the first time he rose to his feet to address a tense and anxious House of Commons it was clear that a remarkable personality had assumed high office. At the end of his first wartime broadcast a few days later the whole nation knew that it had found its voice.

Churchill's wartime oratory was unique, both in its impact and its eloquence. Although showing no academic prowess at school, and without the advantages of a classical or university education, he revealed an absolute mastery of the rhythms and cadences of the English language.

That, allied to an uncanny appreciation of the public mood and the responses of the human heart, enabled him to evoke a unique response from the British people. Whether it was after Dunkirk, when invasion seemed imminent - 'we will fight them on the beaches . . . we will never surrender', or in the aftermath of the Battle of Britain - 'never in all the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few' - his words breathed courage into a beleaguered nation.

He ended one long speech, which realistically set out the military position at the time, with words that have a Shakespearian ring to them: 'Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour".'

Many of my generation remember our parents or grandparents sitting

spellbound around their wireless sets hanging on his every word. He was, quite simply, the voice of Britain, distinctive, eloquent, passionate, utterly committed to the national cause. If ever a sequence of speeches changed history, this was it.

He was precisely the right man for those potentially catastrophic days, urging the nation to 'blood, sweat, toil and tears', but promising in the end victory for justice and freedom. At the end of the War he counselled 'magnanimity in victory', and then, unexpectedly, lost a general election and never again achieved the heights of those wartime years, though he did return as prime minister for four years from 1951. None however can doubt his place as one of the greatest Englishmen of all time.

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On New Year's Day

On New Year's Day a year ago, I started off the year
by making resolutions that were probably severe.
I said I'd save my money, as this seemed very wise.
I vowed I would improve my health. I swore I'd exercise.

I stated I would do my homework every single day.
I'd brush my teeth religiously to ward off tooth decay.
I'd eat my fruits and vegetables and keep my bedroom clean.
I'd treat my sister kindly though she's often very mean.

My resolutions lasted me about a half a day.
I promised I would keep them but I broke them anyway.
So now I'm fat and penniless. My homework's overdue.
My sister's mad. My teeth are bad. My room is messy too.

*And yet I think I may have found
the best of all solutions,
for this year I've resolved
to make NO resolutions.*

Kenn Nesbitt

Silver Birches

Recently, while we were in Edinburgh, we spent a morning frisking the charity shops in the main street of Corstorphine, where we were staying. Almost at once we found a treasure - a charming picture of fishing boats drawn up on a beach. The lady in the shop told us that she would have bought it herself, but had nowhere to display it. That wasn't the only treasure we found there! Jean picked up a copy of *Longbourne (Pride and Prejudice* from the point of view of the servants) and I picked up *Silver Birches*, a short novel by Adrian Plass.

Adrian Plass had been the keynote speaker at the Mothers' Union General Meeting in Bath last year, so we knew him to be an entertaining and incisive speaker. Taking the book home to our holiday cottage, I began to read and was hooked, to such an extent that I had finished the book by that evening.

The central character, David, is recently bereaved after the unexpected death of his wife of less than twenty years. We are immediately introduced to his grief: *The one who was half of your existence is gone but, between them - the vastness of her life, and the elephantine Jurassic creature called Death - leave paradoxically tiny marks or footprints all over your house, your heart and your life. For a long time these marks of passing are to be found everywhere, every day. Each new discovery is likely to trigger a fresh outburst of grief.* David's grief, we learn, has badly inhibited his vocation as a preacher of the Gospel (the denomination is never mentioned).

At this point David receives a long letter from a friend, Angela, who knew them both in the Church Youth Group. She suggests a reunion of some of the members of that group, and reveals that she has something for him from his late wife, Jessica, which she had been asked to give him at some time of her (Angela's) own choosing.

So the scene is set. Angela has been running a retreat/conference house, but has been deserted by her husband. The group gathers over a week-end, and Angela suggests that they discuss and consider the relationships they had when they were young. This inevitably releases tensions, and one member of the group stamps off in high dudgeon the

next morning. The others remain and bravely face the difficulties and failures of their past lives, until a resolution is found as they celebrate the Eucharist together on the final morning. As David leaves Angela hands him a letter Jessica had written just hours before her death. It is the most beautiful and moving letter, and closes the book.

Adrian Plass has written here a compelling account of healing, in that each character in the story is helped by the others to come to terms with their past, and to find some hope for the future. It is not an "everyone lived happily ever after" type of story; we are simply left with the people going away to face the next stage of their lives with a new hope and a weight lifted from their minds.

We are also left with questions about David. Would he and Angela get together? They had had feelings for each other as teenagers, and Jessica's last letter seems to hold hope that it might be the way forward. But then, we are left to ask, What about Jenny? She also had had feelings for David when they were both in the youth group.

It's a story that is well worth reading, for its examination of the healing process, but mainly for the beauty of Jessica's final letter.

Silver Birches (previously published as *Ghost*) is published by Zondervan, and also available as a Zondervan ebook www.zondervan.com/ebooks, and in an audio edition www.zondervan.fm.

Richard Bailey

(First published in "Not Out?", the magazine for retired clergy)

A really easy New Year's resolution you could (probably) keep

Try eating one apple a day. Apparently, it really does keep the doctor away, as seemingly it can be as effective as statins in preventing strokes and heart attacks. Researchers at Oxford University believe that more than 8000 deaths a year might be prevented if over 50s who are not already on statins simply ate an apple each day.

Apples are high in soluble fibre which slows the build-up of

cholesterol-rich plaque in the arteries. Also, apples, unlike statins, have no side-effects. So – they are worth trying!

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Why are chaplains becoming so popular in modern Britain?

You may wonder why, in a Britain that is becoming more secular, so many organisations are appointing chaplains. We are used to chaplains in schools and universities, hospitals, prisons or the armed forces, or Parliament. But so many other organisations are now appointing chaplains to give pastoral and spiritual care to their members. For example, there are chaplains at airports and in shopping malls, often with places set apart for prayer or reflection. There are chaplains in industry, in the world of entertainment, even in football clubs. They must be meeting a perceived need.

In England, chaplains originate from medieval times when they were first engaged by monarchs and noble families. Often chaplains served as clerks – not all noblemen were literate (hence ‘clerk in holy orders’). Chaplains were also paid to say masses for the souls of their patrons, in the hope of gaining favour in heaven. Often chaplains would accompany their lord into battle, on land or sea – the original armed forces chaplains.

So what is the appeal of chaplaincies today? Perhaps it is a natural development in a secular society. In an age when fewer people attend churches it makes particular sense for Christian ministers to join people where they are, offering pastoral and spiritual care to specific groups of people. Jesus himself was without any kind of institution; he had no synagogue or church building. Jesus was on the road, in people’s homes, at the lakeside, on the hillside, engaging people where they were – Pharisees, tax collectors, beggars, prostitutes, the sick and dying, foreigners (Samaritans and Roman Centurions). Chaplains are in the front line of Christian ministry and outreach in the 21st Century, meeting people at opportune moments, often in passing, as Jesus did.

It is appropriate in today’s Britain that chaplains, both ordained and lay, often operate in multi-faith teams, each being true to their own traditions but seeing each other as colleagues rather than competitors.

Many see modern Britain as a post-faith society, but the growth of the ministry of chaplains suggests otherwise. Many people are searching for meaning and something or someone to believe in. People find themselves praying at important times in their lives, however vague their experience of God may be. Chaplains have unique opportunities to be alongside.

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Roll of Remembrance

1st	Grace Barnett	(1972)
2nd	Sarah Jane Tonge	(1953)
3rd	Tony Hayes	(1997)
4th	Frances Dare	(1969)
	Clarence Cooper	(1969)
5th	Elsie Davis	(1984)
	Charles Edward Cooper	(1945)
	Alice Robinson	(2001)
6th	John Hodgson	(1957)
	Rebecca Wigglesworth	(1968)
7th	Donald Arthur Jackson	(1986)
11th	Walter George Hartley	(1961)
14th	Arthur Jones	(1960)
17th	Edith M. Jones	(1951)
18th	William Sadler Stannard	(1978)
19th	Harry Butterfield	(1968)
20th	Gladys Gwendoline Richards	(1980)
21st	Alice Ferguson	(1981)
	Winifred Dare	(1985)
22nd	Bernard Norton	(1992)
23rd	Ritty Hill	(1966)
	Jack Blackburn	(1996)
26th	John William Barratt	(1939)
	Albert Hammond	1970)
27th	Harold Potts	(1982)

29th	John Ayres	(1971)
	Hilda Dennett	(1978)
	William & Emily Spence	(1998)
30th	William Dennett	(1978)
31st	Doris Gibson	(2001)

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