

SERVICES AT THE PARISH CHURCH

Sunday in the Month	8am	9.30am	5.00pm	6.30pm
FIRST (7 th Dec)	CW HC	ChurchFamily Worship and baptism - Choir -	Christingle	-
SECOND (14 th Dec)	CW HC	Morning Worship (CW) - Choir -	CW HC	-
THIRD (21 st Dec)	CW HC	Christmas presentation and Nativity Play	-	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
FOURTH (28 th Dec)	BCP HC	Holy Communion (CW)	-	-

CW = Common Worship. BCP = Book of Common Prayer. HC = Holy Communion

The Choir Christmas Concert is on Sunday 14th December at 7.30 p.m.

SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY

- Christmas Eve - 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)
 - 5.00 p.m. Crib Service
 - 11.30 p.m. Midnight Christmas Communion, (starting with carols at 11.10 p.m.)
- Christmas Day - 9.00 a.m. Christmas Day Communion
 - 10.30 a.m. Church Family Christmas Worship

Sunday mornings

SUNDAY CLUB (for ages 3-14) with three groups:

Junior (3-7); Middle (8-11); Senior (12-14)

all meet in the Church Centre during the 9.30 am service, except on first Sunday when in Church

CRECHE: 0-2 years (every Sunday)

Sunday Evenings

YOUNG PEOPLE'S FELLOWSHIP every Sunday evening during term time in the Church Centre at 6.30 pm (except the first Sunday)

FROGS 11-14 years, first Sunday of month 6 p.m. in Church Hall

Weekdays

HOLY COMMUNION

Every Wednesday 10.00 a.m. (BCP)

Saints Days and Holy Days as announced

If you would like to book a baptism or wedding, please contact the Parish Church Office.
 Vicar's off-duty Day: Monday

DECEMBER 2008

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

- 1 - Morning Prayer will be said in Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays each week at 8.15 a.m. and on Fridays at 9.00 a.m.
7.45 p.m. Homegroup (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 3 - 9.30 a.m. 'First Steps' (Otford Methodist New Hall)
10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP) followed by coffee in the Church Centre
- 7 - **The Second Sunday of Advent**
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
9.30 a.m. Church Family Worship and baptism of Phoebe Grace Thompson
5.00 p.m. Christingle
6.00 p.m. FROGS (Church Hall)
There will be NO Evening Service at 6.30 p.m.
- 8 - 7.45 p.m. Coffee & Chat (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 9 - 8.00 p.m. Homegroup ('Holmesdale', The Green)
- 10 - 9.30 a.m. 'First Steps' (Otford Methodist New Hall)
10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)
- 12 - 7.30 p.m. Tree of Light Service on The Green
- 14 - **The Third Sunday of Advent**
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
9.30 a.m. Morning Worship (CW)
5.00 p.m. Holy Communion (CW) (said)
7.30 p.m. Christmas Choir Concert in Church (Admission £5 for Choir funds)
- 15 - 7.45 p.m. Christmas celebration (17 Leonard Avenue)
- 17 - 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP) followed by coffee in the Church Centre
2.00 p.m. Otford Primary School Carol Service (in Church)
- 18 - 6.00 p.m. Russell House School Carol Service (in Church)
- 21 - **The Fourth Sunday in Advent**
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
9.30 a.m. YPF Christmas Presentation and Sunday Club Nativity Play
6.30 p.m. Service of Nine Lessons and Carols by candlelight
followed by refreshments in the Church Centre
- 24 - **Christmas Eve**
10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)
5.00 p.m. Crib Service
11.10 p.m. Carols followed by
11.30 p.m. Midnight Choral Communion (CW)
- 25 - **Christmas Day**
9.00 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
10.30 a.m. Christmas Worship
- 28 - **The First Sunday of Christmas**
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)
9.30 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
- 31 - 10.00 a.m. Holy Communion (BCP)

Some early January dates

- 4 - **The Second Sunday of Christmas**
8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (CW)
9.30 a.m. Church Family Worship
6.00 p.m. FROGS (Church Centre)
6.30 p.m. Evensong

(CW = Common Worship; BCP = Book of Common Prayer)

Vicar's Viewpoint

Dear Friends,

I wonder if any of you will be asking for Sat Nav for Christmas? It can be very effective. I'm finding it increasingly common that when people want directions they say, "Just give me the post code and I'll put it into my Sat Nav." However, it can also lead you in some surprising ways as you find yourself directed in the quickest, but not the most straightforward, route.

At Christmas time we may also think of journeys. I guess that what comes to mind immediately are journeys to see different branches of the family for the festive celebrations. In this article, however, I want to focus on a different kind of journey. In particular, I'm thinking of those who have set out on a journey of faith on the basis of God's promises to them; and yet the path to the fulfilment of these promises was not always what they were expecting.

Take, for example, Mary. She was given a wonderful promise from God by the Archangel Gabriel that she would give birth to the very Son of God himself. At the outset she could have thought that this would have put her in a very special and privileged position (which it did), and yet the fulfilment of this promise was certainly not in the fashion that she may have expected or hoped for. I doubt she ever thought that she would have to ride for miles on a donkey when she was in an advanced stage of pregnancy, and that she would be giving birth to Jesus in a stable.

Yet she held on to these promises. She didn't understand their full implications all at once. Simeon added a new (and ominous) perspective when he took the baby Jesus in his arms and, looking at Mary, declared that a sword would pierce her own soul, too. Mary was indeed the mother of the Saviour of the World, but it was not going to be an easy path to follow. She pondered these things in her heart. She watched her son grow up, she was worried for him when his ministry seemed to be overwhelming him, and she was there at the foot of his cross. But the last mention we have of Mary in the New Testament is of her among the group of disciples, praising God after the resurrection of Jesus. God was faithful to his promises, even if the path to their fulfilment took a lot of courage and faith through various unexpected twists and turns.

Another example is found in the Three Wise Men. They were given a promise at the outset of their journey. They would find the one who was born to be King, and they had seen his star at its rising. This much was clear. But yet again the journey had its surprises and unexpected turns. They were going to find a King, and so naturally they went to a palace. But this was a big mistake. Their "Sat Nav" had led them in a disastrous direction. They had to seek fresh directions.

Eventually, they were ultimately led to a most unexpected destination. As they progressed in their journey, they had to revise their expectations and through this they grew in their understanding of the full meaning of God's promise to them. When they came to the stable, they realised that here at last was journey's end, and they brought to the Christ child their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, gifts which themselves symbolised aspects of the journey that Jesus himself would travel.

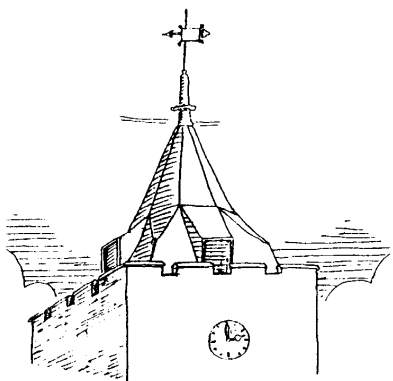
As for Mary, and for the Wise Men, so also for ourselves. We are called to set out on a journey of faith, and yet our experience of this journey is most likely to contain many surprises along the way. The baptism service uses this imagery of a journey. I address the child or adult being baptised with the words, "In baptism God invites you on a lifelong journey...God promises to be with you, in joy and in sorrow, to be your guide in life, to bring you safely to heaven." We may all cherish this promise that God will bring us

(continued on page 5)

safely to heaven. Yet there may well be stages on our journey so far where we may feel that we have gone astray, misinterpreted the direction, or been caught by surprise with events that we had neither anticipated nor planned for. But through all this, we can hold on to the truth that God is faithful to his promises, that we will see their fulfilment in our experience, even if not in a way that we initially expected.

So this Christmas let us be encouraged on our own journey of faith. Like Mary and the Three Wise Men, may we be thankful that God calls each of us to follow in his way. May we renew our commitment to continue on this journey knowing that ultimately God's promises will be fulfilled and we will be brought safely to heaven, for that is why Christ came to earth.

Richard Worssam



FROM ST BARTHOLOMEW'S CHURCH

Christingle

The candlelit Christingle service will be held at 5.00 p.m. in Church on Sunday 7th December.

Posada

During Advent we shall be operating the South American 'Posada' scheme, where different families play host to a set of nativity figures which then return to church for display on Christmas Eve, alongside the traditional Christmas crib.

Tree of Light Service

This will take place on Friday 12th December when there will be a service on The Green at 7.30 p.m., followed by refreshments in the Church Centre. All are welcome and labels remembering those who have died may be obtained from the Parish Office in the High Street, or from Hospice in the Weald, for which organisation donations are invited.

Choir Christmas Concert

The Church Choir's Christmas concert, including carols for choir and audience from across the world, will take place in church on Sunday 14th December at 7.30 p.m. Admission will cost £5, including refreshments, with no charge for under 16s. Please come and support the Choir - and bring a friend!

School Carol Services

We look forward to welcoming local schools to church for their carol services: Otford Primary School on Wednesday, 17th December at 2 p.m. and Russell House School on Thursday, 18th December at 6.00 p.m.

Christmas Presentation and Nativity Play

On Sunday 21st December at the 9.30 a.m. service, the Young People's Fellowship will be contributing to a Christmas Presentation, and the Sunday Club will be performing a traditional Nativity Play.

Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

This popular choral service is to be held on Sunday 21st December at 6.30 p.m. in Church.

Christmas Eve

The services on Christmas Eve will be: a Crib service at 5.00 p.m. and Midnight Choral Communion at 11.30 p.m. preceded by carols at 11.10 p.m.

Christmas Day

The services on Christmas Day are Holy Communion at 9.00 a.m. and Church Family Christmas Worship at 10.30 a.m.

Dates for your New Diary 2009!

There will be the traditional Week of Prayer for Christian Unity service on **Tuesday, 20th January at 8.00 p.m.** in Holy Trinity Roman Catholic Church, Otford.

Saturday, 7th February is the date for the 'Bartholomew' Wind Band Concert in church. The Vicar is planning a Lent programme, 'Pilgrims' Progress', when he will interview five people from the congregation, inviting them to share their favourite Christian books, poems and Bible verses, interwoven with the story of their pilgrimage of faith. These meetings will be held on **Tuesdays 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and 31st March 2009.**

DATES FOR 2009

Sunday 11th January	Annual Churchyard Meeting
Wednesday 14th January	PCC meeting
Tuesday 20th January	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service (Holy Trinity R.C. Church)
Thursday 22nd January	Otford Guild of Bellringers' AGM
Saturday 7th February	'Bartholomew' Concert
Wednesday 11th February	Standing Committee
Monday 16th February	Parish Visit to Westminster Abbey
Tuesday 24th February	Shrove Tuesday
Wednesday 25th February	Ash Wednesday (Holy Communion 8.00 p.m.)
Saturday 28th February	Wedding Preparation Day
Wednesday 4th March	PCC meeting
Friday 6th March	Women's World Day of Prayer (Holy Trinity R.C. Church)
Saturday 21st March	PCC Discussion Morning
Sunday 22nd March	Mothering Sunday
Wednesday 1st April	Standing Committee
Saturday 4 th -Thursday 9 th April	Parish Trip to Spring Harvest at Skegness
Saturday 4th April	Spring cleaning of the Church
Sunday 5th April	Palm Sunday ecumenical procession (10.45 a.m. at Otford Methodist Ch)
Thursday 9th April	Maundy Thursday (Holy Communion 8.00 p.m. Otford Methodist Ch)
Friday 10th April	Good Friday
Sunday 12th April	Easter Day
Tuesday 21st April	Annual Parochial Church Meeting
Sunday 26th April	Commemoration of Departed Loved Ones (3 pm)
Wednesday 6th May	PCC meeting
Sunday 10th May	Christian Aid Week begins
Sunday 10th May	Civic Service at 9.30 a.m.
Sunday 17th May	Confirmation Service 9.30 a.m.
Thursday 21st May	Ascension Day (Holy Communion 8.00 p.m.)
Monday 25th May	Village Fete/Bank Holiday
Sunday 31st May	Pentecost/Whit Sunday
Sunday 7th June	Trinity Sunday
Wednesday 10th June	Standing Committee
Saturday 20th June	St. Bartholomew's Church Fair

Sunday 5th July	Sunday Club Prizegiving
Wednesday 8th July	PCC meeting
Sunday 23rd August	St. Bartholomew
Wednesday 9th September	PCC meeting
Saturday 12th September	Friends of Kent Churches Sponsored Bike Ride
Sunday 4th October	Harvest
Wednesday 14th October	Standing Committee
Sunday 25th October	Bible Sunday
Sunday 8th November	Remembrance Sunday
Wednesday 11th November	PCC meeting
Saturday 21st November	Christmas Market
Sunday 29th November	Advent Sunday
Sunday 6th December	Christingle
Wednesday 9th December	Standing Committee
Sunday 13th December	Choir Christmas Concert
Sunday 20th December	Service of Nine Lessons and Carols
Thursday 24th December	Christmas Eve Midnight Communion
Friday 25th December	Christmas Day

We include extracts from Tony Grogan's report on his latest trek.

Trek Challenge in Nepal – The Annapurna Experience 3rd to 13th October 2008

I am home having completed the 6 day trek through the tough terrain in the foothills to the Annapurna range of mountains in Nepal.

Our party consisted of 44 trekkers (30 Women, 14 men), 2 UK leaders and a doctor, 1 local guide and team leader with 12 assistants, 3 chefs and 80 porters.

Sunday By 12 noon, after our flight and a 1.5 hour bus journey up into the hills we were at the start of our trek in the picturesque valley.

We trekked in the sun until 17.30pm and arrived at our first camp site 30 minutes before dark.

The leeches were very pleased to find us at the camp site and joined us for dinner and in the overnight sleep in the 2 man tents. A very spectacular thunderstorm entertained us during the night.

Monday As was the pattern for all days, we awoke at 5.30 and started trekking at 7.30am after breakfast and warming up exercises. An uphill trek all day through rhodendrum forest on the stone paths took us to the highest point of our climb on Tara Top at 2800m. We arrived at the summit site in the pouring rain just before dusk at 17.30pm. Dinner as usual was excellent. A very wet and cold night with another thunderstorm.

Tuesday We set off down the stone paths, crossing many waterfalls and passing through jungle with wet and steep slippery slopes. From a delightful camp field site we admired the snow clad mountains of Annapurna surrounding us. In the evening local villagers entertained us with folk dances and songs.

Wednesday We trekked to the high view point in the vain hope of getting good views of the Annapurna range.

Thursday a long day trek down thousands of stone steps, crossing rivers by suspension footbridges and following the river down routes frequently interrupted by landslides.

Friday A morning trek uphill and down, through villages rice fields, over into an adjacent valley where the lunchstop by the river in the hot sun provided our last meal before the final trek.

Thank you to all those who supported Macmillan Cancer Support by your generous sponsorship.

Tony Grogan



GUIDE CHRISTMAS POST BOX. The Guide Christmas Post Box will be in Otford Library between Tuesday 25th November and Tuesday 16th December inclusive during opening hours. A second Box will also be available in the Parish Council Office on Monday to Friday between the same dates. All cards will be delivered over the weekend 20th -21st December and all the proceeds will be divided between Demelza House Children's Hospice and Kent Air Ambulance Trust. Stamps will be 20p per card and all money will go to the chosen charities. Please support us by posting early.

The Brownies, their leaders and helpers will continue to organize and run the Christmas Post for the village this year with the Guides, who we hope will be able to meet again in the near future.

OTFORD GARDENERS' SOCIETY. The Society will hold a Quiz and Fun Night, a social evening to round off the gardening year, beginning at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday 2nd December in Otford Village Memorial Hall (free parking). For details of this and all events, please contact the Society Secretary, Janet Finney, on 01959 523760, or e-mail gardeners@otford.net or visit the website on www.otford.info/gardeners.

OTFORD OAST W.I. will meet on Thursday 4th December from 9.30 – 11.30 a.m. at Otford Village Memorial Hall, when Denise Thompson, designer florist, will show us how to make a table decoration at our birthday / Christmas meeting. There will be guests from other Institutes and we will be serving refreshments. There is a free crèche at every meeting. The first visit is free, the second costs £3.00 and annual membership costs £27.00. Tea / coffee at 50p. Come along and bring a friend. Patsy Groom 01959 524156

OTFORD PRIMARY SCHOOL will be holding its Christmas Bazaar in the School on Saturday 6th December, between 12 noon and 3 p.m. Stalls will include a grotto, tea room, craft stall, tombola, face painting, toys, books and many more.

OTFORD AFTERNOON W.I. recently held their annual meeting when a new President and Secretary were elected to serve during 2009, which will be a busy one for our institute as we make plans throughout the coming year to celebrate having been founded 90 years ago. Our final meeting of 2008 is on Tuesday, 9th December at 2.00 p.m. in the Village Hall when we welcome Mr. C.Baldwin, who will speak on 'A Day in the Life of a Toastmaster'. (jca)

OTFORD EVENING W.I. We are looking forward to our Christmas meeting on Thursday 11th December, when our members and invited guests from other local Institutes will hear a talk and have a demonstration by Jayne Sargeant who designs and makes jewellery. There will be light refreshments and a festive air which I am sure will encourage the Christmas spirit.

The first meeting in 2009 will be on 8th January and the annual subscription due is £29. For more information, please contact Diana on 01959 522981.

SPOTLIGHT ON

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Chairman: Mr John Allen

Parish Clerk: Mrs B. Darby. Tel: Otford 524808

Vandalism has occurred again in Otford. This time there was a major damage to the public toilets; the time switch was destroyed and so much damage done to the doors and attempted removal of the door frames that we must replace both with metal ones to prevent their complete destruction. Otford is not alone in this kind of attack; it has occurred in other places in the District. The toilets must remain closed until the work is completed. The cost will be a very large item in the budget, beyond the expected allowance for such problems. Closure may be for many weeks.

The parish office committee room has now been insulated and decorated and will be available again for some village society meetings. There remain some building problems but the room has a new décor, chosen by the clerks, and will be easier to heat.

Allotments: At the time of writing a few plots have become available and could provide significant amounts of vegetables for anyone prepared to spend a few hours a week working there.

The pond repairs continue to give problems because of its listing. As many know, it has for centuries been part of the system of streams in Otford, and was improved with a weir, a hard-dished base and a facing wall, mainly of ragstone, about the time railways were built in the area. In this way it was easier to obtain water from it, which was essential for some.

It was built up above the track/road, and as time passed the materials aged and it sometimes leaked. This became more of a problem when the A225 was diverted round it and, as traffic changed from horse-drawn to today's melee, caused vibrations that did further damage. But when weeping willows were planted there sixty years ago (and made the area more attractive) their roots put pressures on the walls that were not provided for in the 19th century. Damage began to occur and possible collapse in places was a constant worry. The facing was altered to a major extent at least three times last century when cracks and foundations were repaired to prevent frequent leaks. But the position of the stones in 1975 when it was listed was thought by some to be of critical importance and should have been maintained.

To overcome the root pressure there needs to be a wall several inches thick, according to tree experts. Space is limited, of course, and after much thought, to meet this need, we proposed to build a block wall on the base from the 19th century and attach the old ragstones to this (instead of to the clay).

This minimises alterations to the site and the cost but is considered unacceptable to some authorities involved with the listing, who want the facing to be as it was before - and therefore still susceptible to the root and vibration damage that is likely to occur. Sevenoaks District and Otford parish councils are seeking a way forward.

Finally, a happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year to everyone from the Parish Council. No doubt next year will be as eventful for the council as this has been! JGA

* * * * *

1 Corinthians 13 - Christmas Style

If I decorate my house perfectly with lovely plaid bows, strands of twinkling lights, and shiny glass balls, but do not show love to my family - I'm just another decorator.

If I slave away in the kitchen, baking dozens of Christmas cookies, preparing gourmet meals, and arranging a beautifully adorned table at mealtime, but do not show love to my family - I'm just another cook.

If I work at the soup kitchen, carol in the nursing home, and give all that I have to charity, but do not show love to my family - It profits me nothing.

If I trim the spruce with shimmering angels and crocheted snowflakes, attend a myriad of holiday parties, and sing in the choir's cantata but do not focus on Christ, I have missed the point.

Love stops the cooking to hug the child.

Love sets aside the decorating to kiss the husband.

Love is kind, though harried and tired.

Love doesn't envy another home that has coordinated Christmas china and table linens.

Love doesn't yell at the kids to get out of your way.

Love doesn't give only to those who are able to give in return, but rejoices in giving to those who can't.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

Love never fails. Video games will break; pearl necklaces will be lost; golf clubs will rust. But giving the gift of love will endure.



Registers



Baptism (Our Welcome)

2nd November
2nd November

Daniel Richard **Thorburn**
Frederick James Maurice **Thompson**

Deaths (Our Sympathy)

5th October

Susan Janet **Lark** (aged 53)

Church Offerings in October

Open Collections for charities and Church expenses£ 242.18
Freewill Offerings£ 5,236.00

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