

As I write this in the middle of a very snowy January it still seems odd to be dating letters, cheques etc. with the year 2013. I think that the seasons and years appear to whiz round faster and faster as we get older.

As children, we count our age in fractions, "I'm 4 ½", then in our teens we want to be older and jump to the next number, "I'm nearly 18". But then life gets serious: we turn 30, then we're pushing 40, reach 50, make it to 60, hit 70. After that we take each day as it comes and celebrate it. Apparently when we get to 100 we become a child again and count in fractions saying, "I'm 100 ½"!

But the important thing is to enjoy the life that we have. Some of the tips that I have read recently about how to feel younger than we are include: enjoy the simple things, laugh a lot, surround yourself with what you love, tell people that you love them and keep on learning.

As we approach the time of Lent and Easter and think of the short life of 33 years that Jesus had, we should try to appreciate the life that God has given to each one of us. During Lent there will be opportunities to remember the life that Jesus led and the love that he brought to each one of us. In our Benefice there will be special services and a series of Lent talks to which you are all warmly invited. There will be details of these in a special leaflet and on our website.

Remember that Jesus gave each one of us the great gift of life and it is up to each one of us to make the most of it. Life is not measured by the number of breaths that we take, but by those special moments that take our breath away with delight and pleasure.

With love and prayers to you all,

Barbara

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Please feel free to contact me anytime. However, Friday is my day off, so if you need help on this day, please contact Dick or Karen, your churchwardens.

On behalf of St Leonard's PCC, we wish you all a very Happy New Year.

We were delighted to see over 150 people at our three main Christmas services. The Carol, Candles and Crib service was well-attended as usual. After a break of many, many years, we had a Midnight Communion on Christmas Eve which was very memorable. During the service, the Posada set of Mary and Joseph, which had been travelling around the village during Advent, was finally received into church. We hope those of you who got involved in the Posada's journey found it a valuable experience. Our informal family service on Christmas Day was full of joy and we were all home in time to enjoy a lunch time drink.

So what have we got planned for this year? We are grateful to Jackie and Simon for organising a Progressive Supper on February 9<sup>th</sup> and we are delighted to be sharing the proceeds from that with the Downs Syndrome Association. After that, there is our special service for Mothering Sunday. Our Easter activities include , a walk led by donkeys on Palm Sunday, children's activities in Stretton on Good Friday and of course, Easter Day communion. There is a Plant Sale planned for late spring and our Church Fete on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> June.

Discussions regarding WC facilities for church are proving difficult. We are at a crossroads now since we know that the diocese are not in agreement with our present preferred option. We must make a decision on the way forward at our next PCC meeting on 6th February, so if you have any thoughts, please let us have them.

Finally, we are having an open meeting in The Birbury at 7.30 pm on 6th March to consider our Parish Priorities for 2013 and beyond. If you have some thoughts or ideas about any area of church life, we would love to see you at this meeting. If you can't get to the meeting but have something to contribute, please contact one of us.

We look forward to seeing you around the village and at some of our events.

Dick and Karen

### **PRAYERS**

There are many people in our village who are finding life difficult for a variety of reasons. Please could you pray for those who are mourning family members or close friends and also for village friends who are in need of support in their daily living because of ill-health or challenging circumstances.

### **CAROLS, CANDLES AND CRIB SERVICE**

A candlelit pathway greeted villagers as they made their way into church for the Carols, Candles and Crib service in December.

We enjoyed a different telling of the Christmas nativity story, told by the innkeeper's wife (Karen Armbrister). This character may be a bit of a surprise to those of you familiar with the Bible version! But the spirited portrayal by those involved brought to life the events leading up to Jesus' birth - with added sheep sound effects! Towards the end of the service the congregation took the nativity figures up to the crib in the chancel where Barbara said a blessing and the children sang 'Away in a Manger' by candlelight.

This service made a wonderful start to the Christmas celebrations.

Suzy Rawlins

### **CHRISTMAS EVE MIDNIGHT COMMUNION**

For the first time in anyone's memory (well, 70 years according to Barbara Munro's excellent memory), St Leonard's held a Midnight Service on Christmas Eve.

A number of folk met up at the bus shelter and carried lighted lanterns up the hill to the Church. The lych gate was beautifully decorated with ivy and lights and the lanterns were placed on the path to light our way back again. When we stepped into our beautiful church, we received a very warm welcome from those already there.

Carols were sung with enthusiasm accompanied by Kevin on the organ, who also gave a lively, yet thoughtful talk. Communion that evening was a very special time: a wonderful start to Christmas Day.

Thank you to all those who made it possible, especially Reverend Barbara, Kevin and David and Angela Hanson.

Mel Palmer

Your donations at the 'Carols, Candles and Crib' service amounted to **£130.25** which has been sent to **THE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY**

Birdingbury Carol Singers raised **£240.92** for **SHELTER** on a cold, wet evening before Christmas.

Thank you very much for your generosity in supporting these two charities.

Date	Place	Time	Service	Readings	Prayers	Server	Sidesperson	Refreshments	Flowers	Cleaning
<b>Sun 3rd Feb</b>	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion						C. Rogers	M. Bartmanis
<b>Sun 10th Feb</b>	<b>Birdingbury</b> Stretton Bourton	<b>9.15am</b> 11.00 am 6.00 pm	<b>Holy Communion</b> Morning Praise Holy Communion	<b>B. Tompkins</b> <i>2 Corinthians ch3 v12— ch4 v2; Luke ch9 v 28-43</i>	E. Owen	K. Armbrister	S. and G. Davy	P. Law	C. Rogers	M. Bartmanis
<b>Sun 17th Feb</b>	Bourton <b>Birdingbury</b> Frankton Stretton	9.15 am <b>11.00 am</b> 11.00am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion <b>Holy Communion</b> Morning Praise Evening Worship	<b>A. Withington</b> <i>Romans ch10 v8-13</i> <i>Luke ch4 v1-13</i>	D. Withington	A. Armbrister		A. Sedgfield	No flowers— Lent	J. Hart
<b>Sun 24th Feb</b>	Stretton <b>Birdingbury</b> Princethorpe Frankton	9.15 am <b>11.00 am</b> 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion <b>Morning Praise</b> Morning Worship Holy Communion	<b>D. Withington</b> <i>Philippians ch3</i> <i>v17—ch4 v1</i> <i>Luke ch13 v31- end</i>			A. Sedgfield	J. and G. Johnstone	No flowers— Lent	J.Hart
<b>Sun 3rd March</b>	Frankton Bourton Stretton	9.15 am 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Holy Communion						No flowers— Lent	B. Ansell
<b>Sun 10th March</b> <b>Mothering</b> <b>Sunday</b>	Princethorpe <b>Birdingbury</b> Stretton Bourton/Frankton	<b>9.15am</b> 11.00 am 11.00 am 3.00 pm	Holy Communion Family service Family service Service + tea in Village Hall	<b>D. Hanson</b> <i>Colossians ch3 v12-17</i> <i>John ch19 v25- 27</i>	A. Hanson	D. Withington	D. and A. Hanson	S. and G. Davy	A. Laverick	B. Ansell
<b>Sun 17th March</b>	Bourton <b>Birdingbury</b> Frankton Stretton	9.15 am <b>11.00 am</b> 11.00 am 6.00 pm	Holy Communion <b>Holy Communion</b> Morning Praise Evening Worship	<b>M. Markham</b> <i>Philippians ch3 v4-14</i> <i>John ch12 v1-8</i>	K. Armbrister	J. Hawes		I. and M. Palmer	No flowers— Lent	L. Fleming
<b>Sun 24th March</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b>	Stretton <b>Birdingbury</b> Frankton	9.15 am <b>11.00am</b> 6.00 pm	Holy communion <b>Morning Praise</b> Holy Communion	<b>K. Armbrister</b> <i>Luke ch19 v28- 40</i> <i>Psalms 118 v1-2 &amp; 19-end</i>			P. Law	E. Ellis	No flowers— Lent	L. Fleming
<b>Sun 31st March</b> <b>Easter Day</b>	Princethorpe Stretton Frankton <b>Birdingbury</b> Bourton	8.00 am 9.15 am 9.15 am <b>11.00 am</b> 11.00 am	Holy Communion BCP Holy Communion Holy Communion <b>Holy Communion</b> Holy Communion	<b>S. Davy</b> <i>Acts ch10 vv34-43</i> <i>John ch20 vv1-18</i>	E. Owen	M. Bartmanis	E. Ellis	O. Bartmanis	A. Carroll	J. Coles

### **BENEFICE LENT TALKS 2013 – ‘STEWARDSHIP’**

*Each of these evenings are from 7pm. to 9pm and start with a simple meal, followed by a talk and finishing with questions or discussion over a cup of tea or coffee.*

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> Feb ‘Stewardship of our creation’** (Revd. Canon Glyn Evans, Rural Officer, Oxford Diocese) at Bourton/Frankton Village Hall (*Supper by Frankton PCC*)

**Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> Feb ‘Stewardship of our church finances’** (Graham Wright, Diocesan Stewardship Advisor) at Bourton/Frankton Village Hall (*Supper by Bourton PCC*)

**Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March ‘Stewardship of our Spirituality’** (Bishop John Stroyan, Bishop of Warwick) at Stretton Village Hall (*Supper by Birdingbury PCC*)

**Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> March Passover Meal** (Revd. David Shaw, Stretton) at All Saints Church, Stretton (*Hospitality by Stretton PCC*)

### **ADDITIONAL LENT and EASTER SERVICES in the Benefice**

- ◊ Holy Communion at Stretton Church on **Ash Wednesday**, Feb 13th at 7.30 pm
- ◊ **“Soul Space”** – a quiet hour of prayer and contemplation at St. Cuthbert’s, Princethorpe, 6.30pm on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> March, Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March
- ◊ **Maundy Thursday** Communion, 7.30 pm on March 28th at All Saint’s, Stretton followed by a vigil until midnight
- ◊ On **Good Friday** there is a **HBC Easter workshop** in Stretton Village Hall followed by a **Hot Cross Bun service** in Stretton church at 11 am and also **Good Friday Devotions** at Frankton Church at 2 pm

More details from Barbara, Dick, Karen or our website [www.draycotegroup.org.uk](http://www.draycotegroup.org.uk)

### **HOME COMMUNION in Birdingbury**

Wed 13th Feb 10 am at The Birbury hosted by Valerie Smith

Wed 13th March 10 am at Jenny Hawes’, The Gables, Back Lane

### **WOMEN’S WORLD DAY OF PRAYER**

**Are you interested in worshipping with women all over the world?**

Then come to **Bourton/Frankton Village Hall on 1st March at 2.30 pm** for this year’s service and stay for tea afterwards.

### NEW MUSIC FOR EASTER

I have written a new simple setting for Holy Communion, a hymn or two for Lent, plus something joyful for Easter Sunday. I would like to get together some singers, both men and women, to prepare some music for Easter.

The proposal is to practice this new music on Wednesday evenings from 8.15 – 9.30 pm at our house, 'Hayho', Field House Farm, beginning on Wed 6<sup>th</sup> February. There will, of course, be time for a drink too. Please join us if you can.

Bryan and Liz Tompkins (632289)

### ST. LEONARD'S YOUNGEST CHURCH-GOERS

It is quite some time since we have had three new babies in church over a short period.

Phoebe Tooth-Markham, born on November 4th, is becoming a bit of a regular at church. Matt first introduced Phoebe to us in church when she was 3 or 4 weeks old. Freddie

Rawlings, now 9 months old, came to the Candles and Carols service with Suzy, his mum and his grandparents. In addition, Rachel and Adrian Cunningham brought Fletcher, born 5 days after Phoebe, for his first visit to St. Leonard's on Christmas Day.



Phoebe photographed by her daddy

AW

### CASSEROLES @ CHURCH CAFÉ Saturday 2nd March, 12.30 until 2.00 pm

Come and see what we're cooking for you this time.

Eira and Aileen

### HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

I have recently received a cheque from the above for the last "Ride & Stride" which took place on 8th September last year.

Many thanks to those who took part, including Bailey Armbrister. The sum of £82.50 was raised for St. Leonard's Church Birdingbury, being half the amount sent in by walkers/riders. The remaining half of the money we raised has gone to the Trust to make grants to Warwickshire Churches in need of repairs.

Thank you to all who supported this event.

Please note the 2013 Ride & Stride event will take place on Saturday 14th September. Full details from [www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk)

Come on Birdingbury and let's make 2013 a bumper year. Best feet forward!

Daphne Chippendale

On the Sunday before Christmas, Dick and I went to St. Mary's Church in Warwick for a different spiritual experience to the homely and, to some extent, home-grown Christmas services in Birdingbury church.

We thought we were going to their regular Choral Evensong. However, as soon as we got into the church we realised from the crowds that something bigger was about to begin! It was their main Carol Service, attended by the Mayor and Councillors in their official regalia, along with hundreds of other people crammed into seats in all corners of that beautiful, historic gem of a church. Contrary to many churches, our own included, we were amazed to find that it was warm enough to take our coats off inside the church! We had anticipated the music sung by their choristers to be very uplifting – and it certainly lived up to our expectations.

Canon Giles Fraser, who writes in Church Times and The Guardian, said this about the distinction between various church experiences at Christmas:

*“ If you end up poking your nose inside a church over the Christmas period, here are the options. If you want posh church, go to a cathedral. It will be packed. You may have to sit behind a pillar, but the music should be exquisite. ...But if you want a more communal experience, try local.”*

I think he neatly sums up our own recent experiences. On the one hand we experienced ‘theatre of occasion’ and sublime music by the well-regarded choir at St. Mary's, Warwick. On the other hand at home in Birdingbury, we were part of our community ‘am-dram’ style Christmas production including 3 mature angelic angels and good dose of hearty and heartfelt singing of well-known carols. Both were equally enriching and friendly.

Aileen Withington

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