

Who to contact:

Rector:

Rev. David Lake 01788-822147

St. Margaret of Antioch Church St.Crick, NN6 7TP

Church Wardens:

Mr. Dave Milne 01788 824670

Mr Patrick Mulcahy 01788 822393 (Acting)

All Saints' Church, Church Hill, Yelvertoft NN6 LF

Church Wardens :

Mr M. Larder 01788 824237

Mr N. Robertson 01788 822794

All Saints' Church, Station Rd, Lilbourne. CV23 0SX

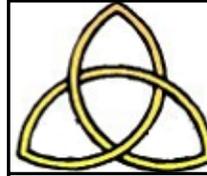
Church Wardens:

Mr. G. Le Flem 01788 860126

Mrs L. Collins 01788 860451

Church websites

Website : www.allsaintschurchlilbourne.wordpress.com
Website : www.lilbournebells.wordpress.com
ACNY - Lilbourne : www.achurchnearyou.com/lilbourne-all-saints/
Facebook, Twitter & Google + Pages.
Tower Captain : Rob Palmer, Tel : 07926 15 18 11,
e-mail : lilbourne.towercontact@gmail.com
Ringing Practice : 1st. & 3rd. Thursday each month 7.15pm. to 9.00pm.



Three Churches Newsletter

Lent 2016

United Benefice of Crick,
Yelvertoft & Lilbourne

Welcome to this Lent edition of the three churches newsletter.

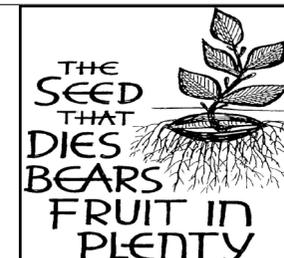
This edition contains the following articles:

- Diocese Offers
- Scripture check : Ian Mackintosh
- Thought from the Pulpit: 'Love!' Revd. D Lake
- FOSM
- Christian Aid
- Mothers Union
- Prayer Pebbles
- Psalm 23
- Chebukutmi Update
- Dates for your diary

Items for the next edition should be with me by 30th May 2016.
Please email word documents to:

patrick.mulcahy123@btinternet.com

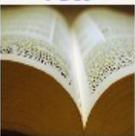
Patrick Mulcahy

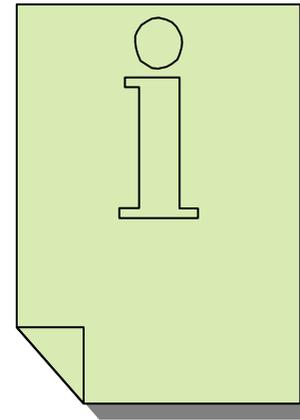


Ever wondered what the Diocese can offer that might enrich our Christian Journey?

One of our fellow travellers alerted me to the following which would be worth following up? Liz Holdsworth 01604 887070

**DISCIPLESHIP MENU - ZONE ONE - 2016 -
Evening Sessions 7:30 to 9:30pm**

Ketton	Brigstock	Spratton	Towcester
The Bible Thursdays 7, 21 Jan, 4, 25 Feb 	Lifestyle Thursdays 3, 17 March, 7, 21 April 	Jesus & the Church Wednesdays 2, 16 March, 6, 20 April 	Sharing My Story Wednesdays 13, 27 Jan, 3, 24 Feb 
Worship, Prayer, Spirituality Thursdays 5, 19 May, 2, 16 June 	Sharing My Story Mondays 27 June, 4, 18, 25 July 	Worship, Prayer, Spirituality Wednesdays 29 June, 6, 13, 20 July 	Life Choices Tuesdays 3, 17 May, 7, 14 June 
Life Choices Tuesdays 27 Sept, 4, 11, 18 Oct 	Jesus & the Church Wednesdays 26 Oct, 16, 30 Nov, 14 Dec 	The Bible Wednesdays 2, 9, 23 Nov, 7 Dec 	Lifestyle Fridays 16, 30 Sept, 14, 21 Oct 



St. Margaret of Antioch
Crick

PCC Meetings

1st February
14th March

APCM

21st April, 7.30

Special Events

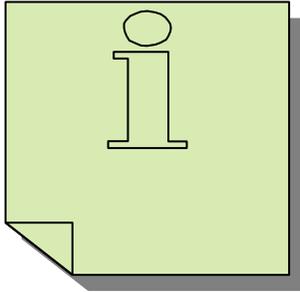
All Saints' Yelvertoft
PCC dates:
7.45pm in the church.

APCM
25th April 7.30

All Saints' Lilbourne
PCC Dates:

10th March
28th April
2nd June
14th July

APCM
24th April



Special Services

United Benefice services:

15th May 2016 :All Saint's Lilbourne.

31st July 2016 :All Saint's Yelvertoft.

30th October 2016: St. Margaret of Antioch, Crick.

These are not to be missed the last three have been spellbinding.

Benefice Bellringing

Have you considered bell ringing ? Join our enthusiastic team of ringers Facebook, Twitter & Google + Pages.

Tower Captain : Rob Palmer, Tel : 07926 15 18 11,

e-mail : lilbourne.towercontact@gmail.com

Ringling Practice : 1st. & 3rd. Thursday each month 7.15pm. to 9.00pm.

ZONE TWO What's on in 2016

A rolling programme of one-off events/sessions celebrating being children of God, exploring the challenges of being disciples of Christ, helping us to grow and live Christian lives more fully, as God's witnesses.

JANUARY

Discipleship in Action day – Sat 30 Jan - Corby Business Academy

Find out more about getting involved in social action in your community

Icon painting course – Saturdays in Jan - St Mary's Church, Northampton

Practical workshop - learn how to write a traditional icon

FEBRUARY

Photography workshop – Sat 13 Feb - Daventry

How to use different cameras, and how to 'see' the world

The Edible Bus-stop – date & venue tbc

Weird and wonderful ways of witnessing

MARCH

Bishop's Bible Day – Sat 12 March - Corby Business Academy

Our annual sharing of the Bible with Bishop Donald

APRIL

Myers-Briggs workshop – Sat 9 April - Bouverie Court, Northampton

Reflecting on self, style and how we interact with others

MAY

Creative writing workshop – Tues evening 10 May

St Peter's, Weston Favell, Northampton

Developing our creative skills to help share our faith

Drumming Workshop – Sun afternoon 22 May

Church of the Epiphany, Corby *Getting into the rhythm of prayer*

Gardening with God – date tbc - Peterborough

Exploring the beauty of creation through gardening

JUNE

Winnie the Pooh, Tigger, God and me – Sat 11 June - Peterborough

What can the '100 Aker Wood' teach us about living life to the full?

Christian responses to natural disasters – venue & date tbc

How the church in Nepal responded after the earthquakes

JULY

The Richard Beadon lecture - Sat 2 July - Northampton High School

What does it mean to be a disciple in everyday life?

PLUS regular forums on

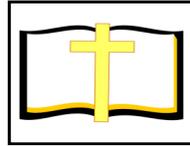
Exploring the relationship between Faith and Science

Being a Disciple in the Workplace

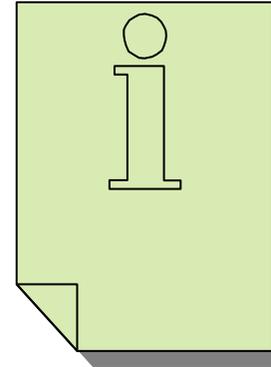


Thoughts from the pulpit

Help yourself from the bookstall.



1	Acts 4 verse 36	'In which we meet Barnabas otherwise known as son of encouragement'
2	Mark 3 verse 20 to end	Jesus accused of being in league with the devil and asks the question 'who is my mother, brother and sister'
3	Mark 4 verse 35 to end	In which a major storm erupts, the disciples panic, and peace is restored
4	Matthew 6 Verse 1 to 14	'In which Jesus recommends quiet unobtrusive prayer'
5	Matthew 11 verse 25-27	'Pride, it's deadly'
6	Luke 10 verse 38	'In which a woman called Martha welcomes Jesus into her home'
7	John 6 verses 51- 58	<i>In which Jesus says</i> <i>"Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in them,"</i>
8	Luke 5 verses 1- 11	In which Jesus sees the ordinary details of life and chooses his disciples!
9	Mark 9 verse 37	In which Jesus says ' whoever receives one such child in my name receives me and whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me'
10	Luke 11 verses 1- 11	In which Jesus teaches us to pray to God the Creator using the term daddy
11	Luke 10 verses 1- 9	In which Jesus chooses his advance party to bring healing and comfort to the world and to spread the message that the Kingdom of God has come to you.
12	Psalm 46 verse 10	Be Still and Know that I am God
13	Mark 13 verses 1- 8	In which Jesus says 'You see these great buildings? Not a single stone will be left in its place every one will be thrown down.'
14	John 18. verses 33-37	In which Jesus says 'I was born to and came into the world for this purpose to speak about the truth. Whoever belongs to the truth listens to me'

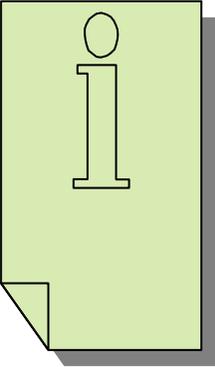


Ash Wednesday Services
Wednesday 10th February
St. Margaret's
10.30am
All Saints Yelvertoft
7.30pm

Easter Day
Communion
9.45am SMC
11.15am ASL
11.15am ASY

Easter Special Services

Mothering Sunday
 6th March
 9.45 SMC
 11.15 ASY
 11.15 ASL
Palm Sunday
 20th March
 11a.m procession from memorial ASY
Maundy Thursday
 24th March
 7.30pm (at ASL)
Good Friday
 9.30 Family Service ASY
 Followed by hot cross buns
 12.00 ASL
 13.00 ASY
 14.00 SMC



Special Activities

All Saints' Lilbourne.

June 4th 7.30 Nicholas Martin

Cakes Raffle prizes.

18th June Summer Fete.

Contact Jan to offer help.

Lent Worship and Music for the Benefice;

St Margaret's Church

Wednesday in Lent

17th February.

24th February

2nd March

9th March

16th March

11 am Holy Communion followed by lunch in church and a 30 min Music Recital from 12.30pm.

We are delighted to be able to offer this to anyone who would like to join us and there will be no charge.



SCRIPTURE CHECK

A little help to encourage you to delve into God's Word



Righteousness ?

Moses describes in this way the righteousness that is by law: "The man who does these things will live by them." But the righteousness that is by faith says: "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'"(that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?'"(that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith that we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile [*i.e. anyone!*] – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

[NIV Romans 10 vs5-13]

Comment

Paul, in this passage is quoting from the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 30 vs12-14) and placing Christ at the centre of the search for God's word. We have no need to ask 'Who can go up into heaven for this word?' for God has already sent his Son, Jesus, down to enlighten us. Neither need we go down into the world of the dead -for Christ, who went there, has been resurrected and is alive today. Notice the two conditions for assurance of our salvation; firstly, witness – we want to tell somebody that Jesus is now the Lord of our life; secondly we believe in our heart (not just head knowledge, but in every fibre of our being) in the resurrection of Jesus. Demonstrate this trust and you will never be put to shame. Jesus is Lord of all, not just one or another group of people but of every single person on the planet. Everyone who chooses to acknowledge this and place their trust in him will be richly blessed. You may have a hard life, or be experiencing persecution but no one can take away that inner calm and assurance, that rich blessing that passes all understanding.

Ian Mackintosh

DO YOU EVER LOOK AT ST. MARGARET'S AND WONDER ABOUT ALL THE GENERATIONS THAT HAVE PASSED THROUGH OR AROUND IT?

There has been a church on the site since Saxon times and the present building has stood there for nearly 1,000 years. It is open 365 days a year for anyone to admire the architecture or spend a few moments away from the bustle of everyday life. The churchyard, as well as its obvious purpose, is a haven for wildlife and gives a chance to ponder on some of the old Crick families and their lives – some, sadly, very short.

St. Margaret's is at the heart of the village in the heart of England. Even if you're not "religious", but care about our heritage, you can help, either by becoming a Friend of St. Margaret's or supporting the Hundred Club or our other events

Ring Sue Milne on (01788) 824670 for details.



FOSM NEWS

After our successful flower arranging demonstration and Scarecrow Weekend activities, we were extremely grateful for the donations of £1,000 each from Wendy and Peter Jordan, these donations to be used for exterior stonework repairs at the appropriate time.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Curry Nights

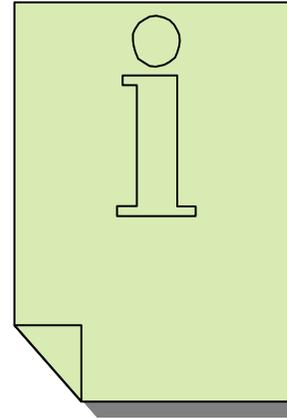
- **February 19th 2016**
- **March 18th 2016**

Other activities

Saturday March 12th Bryan Shaw Memorial Concert .

Saturday May 14 - a welcome return by Bilton Silver Band.

Not to be missed!



Weekly and Monthly Activities

All Saints' Yelvertoft

Toddler Church Wednesday 2pm-3pm in the Reading Room.

Contact Sheila 822794

Tuesday Chat , first Tuesday of month at 25 High St. Yelvertoft.

St Margaret's Crick

Little Saints pre school group
Monday 2.15 –3.15 in the church.

Bible Study, 2nd and 4th
Thursdays 7.30 at 4 Bury Dyke.

Holy Communion

Wednesday 10.30.



Prayer meeting:

Last Wednesday of Month

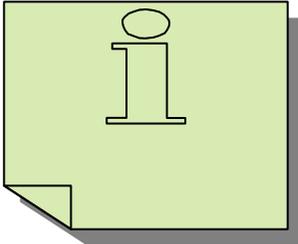
Contact Lorna Taylor

24th February Crick

30th March Yelvertoft

27th April Crick

25th May Yelvertoft



Special Events



All Saint's Lilbourne
27th February
1.00 P.M.
Jumble sale
Village Hall
Refreshments available
Contact Jan. 860742
jkalexander@gmail.com

FOSM
Bryan Shaw Memorial Concert
March 12th 2016
Evening

A memorial concert will be held in aid of Cancer research and Church Funds.

Bran Shaw and his father arranged concerts in aid of the organ restoration at St. Margaret's Crick.

Bryan used to bring students from Leicester School and they will make a return visit in 2016.

I am assured this is an event not to be missed.

Admission by donation.

Patrick Mulcahy

Easter People :
Children's activity morning:
Saturday 19th March
St Margaret's Church
10am – 12noon
Join the fun with Anna



Prayer Pebbles

The Prayer Pebbles scheme has now been up and running for over 2 ½ years, and we regularly get over 100 pebbles to pray for.

At first we were sceptical of whether anybody would use this facility but the results speak for themselves.

Basically we offer people the opportunity to request a prayer by selecting a pebble and thinking about what they would like to pray for, then the pebble is placed into a bowl of water.

On the last Wednesday of the month at 7pm a group of us meet together to pray for the pebbles, and any other prayers that are requested or needed in the Benefice including any prayer board requests or prayer box requests.

It may seem a little odd that we do not know what people want us to pray about or for, however God knows what the prayer requests are for and we simply intercess and place the prayers before God once more.

The idea came when I was trying to think about a way that people could access prayer requests simply in an unmanned church which didn't involve writing a card and pinning it on a board for all to read, it occurred to me that the prayer requests should be anonymous.

In our big Cathedrals which are manned daily, people have access to lighting a candle as a request for prayer however this is not possible in our small rural churches and I thought there must be an alternative option.

I did some research into different types and methods of prayer and came across this simple and accessible idea. The more I thought about it the better it seemed.

There is of course a lot of symbology involved in the process with the careful selection of a pebble and the conscious request through this for prayer. The pebble prayer is then washed when it is placed in the water cleansing it, and it is bathed throughout the day in light as the bowls are clear glass or plastic. We remove the pebbles from the bowls carefully dry them and then hold them in our hands to pray for the requests that they symbolise.

We have a very strong core group of people to pray monthly but would always welcome anyone who would like to join us.

Lorna Taylor

Books for Lent?

The Real Godsend: Nigel Wright

Longing ,Waiting, Believing: Rodney Holder



HOPE IN OUR VILLAGES

Crick – Lilbourne – Yelvertoft



QUEEN'S 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS STREET PARTIES:

HOPE in our villages planning group, are seeking to organise separate Street Parties in each of the three villages to Celebrate the Queen's 90th. Birthday on Sunday 12th June 2016. Communities across the country are planning to give thanks & celebrate, including a large Party in the Mall, London. We are hoping to set up working parties in each of the three villages, the first of these is planned for Tuesday 23rd. February, at the Old School Crick at 7-30pm. Details for the other villages to be announced.

If you would like to be involved in planning these parties, please come to one of the open meetings

MAKE A NOTE ON THE DATE TO CELEBRATE: 12TH JUNE 2016

Christian Aid week :May 15th to 21st 2016

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to last year's Christian Aid collection in Crick. The village total was just over £1,000.

I am very grateful to all the people who collect the envelopes in their allocated roads. The collection wouldn't happen without your help. As the village grows larger, we need more people to volunteer to be collectors. The more people we have, the easier the workload becomes. It need only take a couple of hours one evening during Christian Aid week. If anymore thinks they could help out in this way, please contact me and I will discuss it with you.

Anne Rogers
11 The Paddock
822436

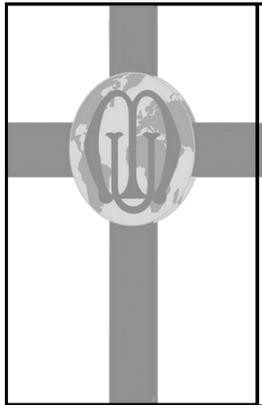


June 12th 2016

Special celebration to commemorate the Queens 90th birthday.

Keep the date free





Mothers Union Care for families.

The Yelvertoft branch serves members of the benefice and meets monthly in the reading room on the third Thursday of the month at 2pm (except December)

The Mothers Union is a charity based in the Church of England to support Christian care for families both home and abroad. Members are not only Mothers: it is family orientated.

Mothers Union Lunches during Lent

Yelvertoft Reading Room

12 noon – 1.30 pm

beginning Thursday 11th February.

In aid of a Mothers Union supported charity.

Mothers' Union

All Saints' Yelvertoft

Meets 3rd Thursday of each month

Reading Room

Yelvertoft

2pm

In my advent readings I came across this translation of the 23rd Psalm by Joseph Addison. I thought that this was helpful for Lent especially read in conjunction with TS Eliot's Ash Wednesday.

Psalm 23 : The Lord My Pasture Shall Prepare

The Lord my pasture shall prepare
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noonday walks He shall attend
And all my midnight hours defend.

When in the sultry glebe I faint
Or on the thirsty mountain pant,
To fertile vales and dewy meads
My weary, wandering steps He leads,
Where peaceful rivers, soft and slow,
Amid the verdant landscape flow.

Though in a bare and rugged way,
Through devious lonely wilds, I stray,
Thy bounty shall my pains beguile;
The barren wilderness shall smile,
With sudden greens and herbage crowned,
And streams shall murmur all around.

Though in the paths of death I tread,
With gloomy horrors overspread,
My steadfast heart shall fear no ill,
For Thou, O Lord, art with me still;
Thy friendly crook shall give me aid
And guide me through the dreadful shade.

David preached this sermon in December . At the time I thought it might be worth considering the same thoughts in relation to Jesus' final hours in the garden, and his prayer from the Cross as he committed himself to his Fathers care.

The Christmas story is so familiar to us now that rather like one of those timeless films which they'll be showing on *some* TV channel *somewhere* in the world this Christmas, we know exactly what's coming next. So, perhaps it's not the increasing commercialism which presents the problem but our own sense of wonder which needs a little gentle tending. So, I wonder how differently things might have turned out if Mary had said, "no" to God, Perhaps you've we never entertained that as a possibility. But like all of us Mary had free will and therefore she *could* have said "no" even as she said, "yes" which spins off into another question for me: do you think God approached any other young women before He spoke to Mary through the angel or was she the first one?

All this may sound like of those theological conundrums, like how many angels can you dance on the head of a pin. But I'm sure you see my point. I mean, how many people like Mary do *you* know?

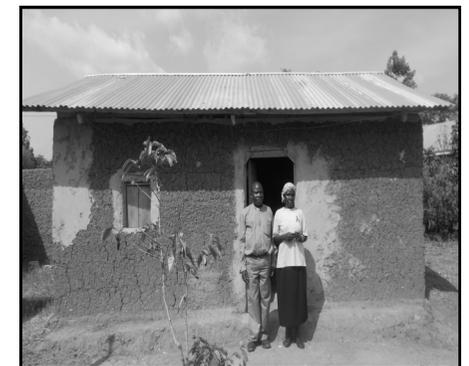
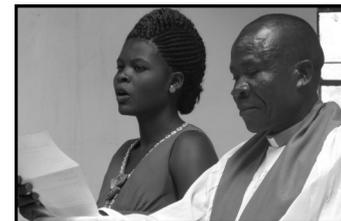
Luke tells us that Mary was engaged to Joseph and we all know what that entails. This last fortnight I've seen no less than 4 couples who've come to me to plan their weddings for 2016. So, you don't need me to tell you that they come not only with their dreams but with a great many plans. Oh, the plans they have for the church service ... where they're going to hold the reception...where they're going on their honeymoon ... the wedding dress... I could go on and on telling you all about all that. So, how do you think the bride would respond if said, *"You know it's lovely to hear all your plans but how do you feel about giving all*

rooms, laboratory, staff room, kitchen and food store. It was a joy for me to tour it and talk to the staff and encourage the students. All this development has largely arisen through the success of our link.

Over the same period the church has benefited from our link in a similar manner with the development of its fabric and it was a great pleasure to spend a lovely Sunday morning in it sharing with the congregation their very long and vibrant service and baptism followed by lunch in the vestry. The letter from our Rector was read out by Rev. Christopher Sangura and translated into local tongue by our charity correspondent Elizabeth. The money that had been sent through the link last year had been wisely spent on projects that had previously been agreed. The primary school had repaired the boys toilets which had been damaged in a storm and the church had constructed one of 4 houses built for widows. We met widow Mama Benteta Wangusi, who has 8 children, outside her new 2 roomed home pictured with Rev. Christopher and she was extremely grateful for the support she has received from Crick United Benefice.

Please remember our Chebukutumi brothers and sisters in your prayers.

Geoff Brown - Link Correspondent - 01788822718



CHEBUKUTUMI UPDATE

In March I stayed with the headteacher of Chebukutumi Primary School, David Saenyi, and his delightful wife and teacher Mama Grace. I lived on their compound and homestead where I had stayed twice before sharing in their very basic facilities of no electricity or running water and with only a small bowl of warm water for washing in the morning but their welcome and hospitality was huge. David was with us in 2012 and on his return he registered a company with the Kenyan government to act as a main contractor for the protection of springs. In 2002 when our link was initiated his school had 300 students and today it has grown to around 850 with a target of 1000.

The growth of the primary school through our support inspired David to pursue his vision to do something for his girls who normally would have no hope or opportunity of a secondary education. To this end he convinced the government to allow him to set up a secondary girls' school on a plot next to the primary school and church compound. The government permission to set up the school was significantly enhanced by the existence of the enormous harvested water tank in the compound which I had organised following my first visit in 2007. At that time there was no water at the primary school during the dry season and a water supply for a secondary school is mandatory. I felt very honoured to accept my name in the registering of the Geoff Brown Girls' High School and in 2011 it had only a plot of land with 21 students using a primary classroom. This year it was a huge privilege for me to visit it for the first time and see all the facilities which our charity had helped to fund. More especially I was able to present prizes and scholarship awards to the students. The girls at Rugby High School are raising funds each year for a scholarship as a direct result of David's visit to the school in 2012. Today the new school has over 150 students with its own compound, 6 class-

that up for God?" How do you think she'd respond? *"Well, I've been waiting all my life to hear an invitation like this. Yes, why not? Let's do this.* No, I don't suppose so, either. The bride to be has her plans; she's had this dream ever since she was little girl that she would meet a man who was caring and kind and who loved her more than anyone else in the world.

And as their love grew, eventually it's time to face the facts and call the vicar.

And that dream, which I hear all about and help her to plan and put some wheels underneath, is all she has in her mind. If you've heard Jean Lupton you'll know that part of her story is the comment she makes that all her young life she'd dreamt about getting married in a church with a sticky out dress and the reality became a registry office with a sticky out stomach...

God asked Mary to abandon all those plans and put Him, not Joseph, not the wedding, but Him, first. Mary had a wedding dress that didn't fit any more. The marriage with all her and Joseph's extended family and her proud mum and friends in attendance, how do you think that turned out for Mary? No big reception afterwards for her. But for Mary now, one of those services which in the old days they used to call a "hole in the wall" kind of service. I think that's a surprising part of the Christmas story worth reflecting on because it tells us a lot about Mary and her relationship with God...

So when biblical commentators and even vicars (of whom I number myself as a culprit) tell us how obedient Mary was to God's call, I think now, maybe we've seen this film too many times. And we need to recover what the Christmas story is really all about. Because this in every aspect is simply a story of love. God's love for you and me ... God's love for Mary and Joseph and Mary's love for God... be-

cause if love doesn't require some sort of sacrifice on our part, it probably isn't love at all, and I think Mary knew that at such a young age, which makes me stop and wonder.

Mary wondered, too. And love doesn't prevent our questions. Mary questioned God but her question is not "why me?" but "how me?" "How will this happen?" Even now, I think, any woman would be asking that question, *don't you?* What are going to do to me? But when the angel assures her that with God all things are possible, Mary consents. God will make it happen and she trusts God.

I've never faced the prospect that Mary faced but some years ago, I did feel that God was asking me to go through something and I have to say I was very daunted by the prospect. And I made my feelings known to God in the plainest way I knew how. In fact I told Him repeatedly how I felt. Naturally, you'd prefer to hear that your vicar is such a faithful and obedient Christian and that he'd do anything God asks. I wish I could say that was true but I'm afraid life doesn't always work that way for me and probably doesn't for you. We pray sometimes for a way out and we look for an exit door but all the doors suddenly feel like they're closing on you. I did hear from God – eventually – and what I felt Him say changed not only how I started to see the situation but it changed me and other situations since. I felt God say, *"David, I would never do anything to hurt you."*

God would never do anything to hurt you ... do you believe that? Mary did. She didn't try to stay in control, she didn't resist God's invitation; somewhere deep inside her she knew; she knew that God would never do anything to hurt her...

Well, everyone has their own experiences of God, whether those experiences are big or small. But here's a consistent pattern; some time later – it always happens - we're not quite so sure. God turns up in your life; He makes Himself known. But sometime later you have some questions – maybe even a few doubts. It's then you need the



Lent

Lent is a tree without blossom, without leaf,
Barer than blackthorn in its winter sleep,
All unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees
The setting up, the dressing-up of trees,
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,
A starkness after all has been withdrawn
Of surplus and superfluous,
Leaving no hiding-place, only an emptiness
Between black branches, a most precious space
Before the leaf, before the time of flowers;
Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower,
Lest we should miss the stars.

Jean M Watt

counsel and the encouragement of someone else. You need find someone with whom you can share the news and see if they feel just as you do. Mary visits Elizabeth, her cousin.

The angel had already told Mary that Elizabeth against all the odds was pregnant, too — so, unsurprisingly, Mary seeks her out. Elizabeth, the older, wiser, woman in the family, someone with whom Mary can share her news; someone she can trust to understand what has happened and confide in. Because as you know, you have to share these kind of experiences with someone.

But Mary's visit to Elizabeth gives her more than that. In fact, it gives *both* women much more. The moment when these two cousins greet each other, it's as though the babies they are carrying inside them greet each other, also. That must have been quite a moment for Mary ... Elizabeth, too, of course. But for Mary this is the moment when she realises that God has not just asked a great thing of her, He has also given her a great thing.

God asks a great deal of us, too. I know that and I am grateful and gladdened that *you* have responded, too, because it sends the most wonderful message to the world. People give their time to so many things. They have their plans and they work to bring those plans about. And you have your plans, also. But it hasn't stopped you giving an enormous amount to God in service of the church. And God knows all that you do and the time and commitment that takes. But God does not just ask great thing of us; He has also given us great things. The task He has called us to accomplish – the things we do for the don't come without sacrifice, do they? But none of us is entirely alone in bearing that sacrifice – even when it seems sometimes as though we are. Because one of the greatest gifts that God gives to us is the gift of each other. And so often, we only ever truly find out about ourselves – we only

find out who we truly are – when we share what God has asked of us with each other and with God.

And when you stop to think about it, this surely is the real message of Christmas. The Word made flesh didn't happen without the cooperation and joyful consent of a young woman. Mary wasn't showing obedience to God anymore than my wife is obedient to me when she knows I've been in my study for several hours and she makes a cup of coffee and puts it on my desk. Or when I come home – at the last minute – and there's always a hot dinner waiting for me. Do you think that is obedience? No, neither do I? Right at the beginning I asked how many people like Mary do *you* know? Well, as it happens, I know quite a lot, actually...

God would never do anything to hurt you ... do you believe that?

Is faith the stepping out into the unknown in the knowledge of the above?

What is God calling me to do in 2016?



Prayer Pebbles: see page 7

The editors personal take:

Our Churches have for some years had a bowl and pebbles with an invitation to pop a pebble into the water as a prayer and each month the pebbles are collected and form the basis of a short prayer evening.

I had seen in other churches a similar approach to prayer and wondered how it could work. Oh me of little faith!

I have observed visitors to the church selecting a pebble and dropping it into the bowl. People seem to chose a pebble by size, shape or colour or weight. Hold it ,caress it and drop it in. Perhaps there is something in the letting go, the plop into the water and the floating down that brings release?

Our evenings are led by Lorna either in Crick or Yelvertoft where all the months pebbles are shared amongst the group members.

There is something about the numbers, usually 100 pebbles, the shapes, the weight the colours, the physical act of taking up the pebbles from the water ,the holding the sharing that brings the unknown prayer to Gods throne, who knows before we ask.

There is something special about being allowed to share in peoples cries of help, thanksgiving and needs.

We meet on the last Wednesday of the month. Come and join us.

Details from Lorne Taylor .