



The Beacon

December 2011/
January 2012

The monthly newsletter of
St. Mary's Church, Andover

For Your Prayers

- For Canon John, Alex and all those leading services at this particularly busy time of year.
- For both our Churchwardens, with thanks for their commitment.
- For the schools and college within our parish, and for those of St. Mary's serving as governors and assisting in other ways.
- For guidance as we listen to how we may respond to the opportunities and challenges flowing from The Vision.
- For three charities that work within our parish, Bridge That Gap, The Food Bank, and the Crisis Centre, as we support them this Christmas.
- That the peace of Jesus may truly be real to everyone at this season of Christmas.

Editorial

This is a combined December/January edition of The Beacon. As well as the usual information, in it you will find the following double-page spreads:

- From the Reverend Canon John Harkin
- Update on Our Shared Vision, and focus on Prayer
- News of, and from, our new Churchwarden
- Alex's Scripture Letter
- December 2011 Service Rota
- The Friends of St. Mary's Report for 2011
- Requests for help

Many thanks go to all who have submitted articles, shared thoughts, and sent in notices.

February Beacon

The deadline for articles to appear in February's edition of The Beacon is **Friday 20th January**, so that this can be made available for Sunday 29th January.

Martin Bazire

From the Reverend Canon John Harkin

Dear friends,

Christmas is almost upon us and I imagine that most of us are looking forward to the future with a variety of emotions ranging from uncertainty perhaps or even fear, to excitement and enthusiasm and keen anticipation for all that lies ahead. Whatever the future holds God cares about us and loves us, and His promise is that He will always be with every single person.

We can be reassured this Christmas that God Himself, incarnate in human flesh, born as a baby in a manger scene, loves us personally as His very own special, unique child, and we can be certain of that because God has spoken these promises to us in His Written Word, the Holy Bible.

Mother Teresa knew that when she said these words *"Spread love everywhere you go; first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a neighbour... let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier..."*

Wouldn't that be a wonderful gift to share with each other this Christmas as we remember the birth of Jesus? A community of disciples based here at St. Mary's, all different yet linked by a common desire to give away the gift of love, and to become more like Christ in the process.

A cynic however might say "No way, nice thought but totally unrealistic!" and of course they would be right unless God Himself was at work within us, His Holy Spirit helping us, enabling us to give away the love of Jesus to a broken and hurting world. And because that is what is happening in and through us then absolutely nothing is unrealistic or impossible!

I read once of a man named Paul who received a car from his brother for Christmas. As he came out of his office on Christmas Eve a street urchin was walking around the shiny new car, admiring it. "Is this your car mister?" he asked. Paul nodded "My brother gave it to me for Christmas."

The boy was astounded. "You mean he gave it to you and it didn't cost you nothing? Boy, I wish..." he hesitated. Of course Paul knew what he was going to wish for, he was going to wish he had a brother like that.

But what he said jarred Paul all the way down to his heels. "I wish" the boy went on "that I could be a brother like that." Paul looked at the boy in astonishment, "Would you like to take a ride?" he asked. "Oh yes, I'd love that."

After a short ride the boy turned with his eyes aglow and said, "Mister, would you mind driving in front of my house?" Paul smiled, knowing the lad wanted to show his neighbours that he could ride home in a big car. But Paul was wrong again.

"Will you stop where those two steps are?" the boy asked. He ran up the steps, and then came back slowly, carrying his little crippled brother. He sat him down on the bottom step, then sort of squeezed up against him and pointed to the car.

"There she is, Sammy, just like I told you upstairs. His brother gave it to him for Christmas and it didn't cost him a penny. And some day I'm going to give you one just like it... then you can see for yourself all the pretty things in the Christmas windows that I've been telling you about."

Paul got out and lifted the lad to the front seat of the car. The shining-eyed older brother climbed in beside them and the three of them began a memorable ride.

That Christmas Eve Paul learned what Jesus meant when He said, "*It is more blessed to give...*"

Each year Christmas brings a reassurance to us all, no matter what our background or standing that God cares for us, and loves us. Over a third of the world's population of 7 billion people are Christians and will be sharing with us across the globe the celebrations of this momentous and wonderful occasion.

May I encourage you too as you look forward to this amazing season, to draw closer to God through His Son Jesus Christ, to experience all the good things that He wants to give to you, and in turn to love other people in our parish and our communities, as we face the future together.

Sue and I thank you for your support and friendship over the year and assure you of our prayers for the future together.

We wish you all a very happy and holy Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Canon John

Our Shared Vision

If we had to put our Vision into a simple statement it might look something like this:

We are a community of faith that seeks God in worship,
serves one another and shares the love of Jesus

We do this by being Spirit led, Christ centred and Bible based, rooted together in prayer. And after the prayerful process that led us all to our Vision Day together we have sensed God's Vision for us to be working these things out in the three areas of **Prayer, Small Groups and Outreach.**

Now that a new Churchwarden has been elected, Gordon, Nigel and I are working together to formulate how we can set up the groups so that anyone who is interested can help shape the way forward in each of these three areas of our mission and ministry. We all need clearly defined and agreed objectives so that we know quite specifically what we are trying to do. We also need to know exactly what will be required to achieve our objectives as we pray, support each other and share the life transforming power of Jesus' love in real and practical ways in our local communities!

So please continue to pray and to listen to the Holy Spirit, what might He be saying to you about what He wants you to do for Him? Is this slightly daunting, to make yourself vulnerable to listen to what He might be saying to you personally? Yes, it is! But it is also exciting, creating a renewed sense of passion for God, for prayer, for mission, for doing something new for Christ, knowing you are not alone, because we are all supporting and praying and being there for each other, perhaps now even in new ways and more than before.

You could start in a small way by making a conscious decision to join a small group, either an existing one or to start a new one with people you feel comfortable with. You could come to the monthly prayer evening, even if you've never been before, or don't like praying out loud, just come and pray quietly.

Or you could help get the next Alpha Course off the ground, why not come yourself and bring a friend? Many church going Christians have found it to be a great help in their faith so what might God be wanting to say to you? And what do we mean by outreach, what shape might that take and who are we trying to outreach too? What about all those schools in the parish? If we don't consider ourselves to be particularly gifted in this area we could always ask God to give us a heart, a passion to do His work - and then don't be surprised when He answers your prayer!

Our Shared Vision continued...

Faith is spelt **R I S K** so let's all consider what that might mean to ourselves and to our church community. As I've said before these are exciting days for St. Mary's, I passionately believe we stand at the dawn of a new age in the witnessing life of this church community. Let us all be prepared to play our part so that body of Christ functions hugely effectively in the days ahead.

Schools and College in our Parish

Please pray for the nine schools and one college that are within our parish and the new school that is being built at Picket Twenty.

They are Andover College, Anton and Vigo Infant Schools, Anton and Vigo Junior Schools, Winton Secondary School, Andover C of E Primary School, The Mark Way School (for 11-16 years of age), Norman Gate School (for 4-11 years of age) and Wolverdene Primary School.

The new school which is to be built in our parish is scheduled to be open in September 2013. Along with Andover Primary School this will give us two Church of England Schools which specifically have the Christian faith as part of their founding ethos and which will be reflected throughout the schools.

Details of the new school can be found online at www.hants.gov.uk, and there are copies of the plans and drawings available to look at in the Parish Office.

Please pray for all these centres of education and learning within our parish, for the academic, administrative and support staff, for the children and young adults who attend, and for those on governing bodies.

New governors are always welcome at schools, in particular at the present time there is a need for new people to offer to serve at the two Church of England schools, at East Street and Picket Twenty.

Pray for Canon John, Gordon Bell and Chris Lawton who already serve on the temporary governing body at Picket Twenty and pray too about whether you could offer to serve as a foundation governor.

Do speak to Gordon, Chris or Canon John for further information.

Our Shared Vision - Prayer

Christians believe that our Lord God has planted within every single one of us the capacity to respond to Him.

We do this almost without realizing as we wonder at a magnificent sunset or the birth of a new baby, as we feel our hearts swell with love for a person who is so special to us or as we feel such gratitude from the bottom of our hearts for an answer to a prayer that means much to us.

Or we may specifically spend time in prayer, in adoration or confession, thanksgiving or praise, sometimes using words, sometimes silence, sometimes just enjoying being in the presence of the Lord Jesus.

Prayer is ultimately about our response to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is at the heart of Christianity, because at the heart of Christianity is a relationship with God. That is why it is the most important activity of our lives.

Those in our fellowship who will join the group addressing the whole area of Prayer as one of the three strands of our Vision will focus on the specifics of what and how this will mean to us as we move forward.

Alongside that we will be looking at what I pray will be a **practical series of sermons** on Sundays, entitled '**Adventures in Prayer**' which will be designed to help us look at the whole area of prayer in an informative manner. These talks will cover Sundays in January, starting on the 8th and including 15th, 22nd and 29th.

In an article from the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry I found this lovely answer to the question 'What is Prayer?' The response was:

'Prayer is the practice of the presence of God. It is the place where pride is abandoned, hope is lifted, and supplication is made. Prayer is the place of admitting our need, of adopting humility, and claiming dependence upon God. Prayer is the needful practice of the Christian. Prayer is the exercise of faith and hope. Prayer is the privilege of touching the heart of the Father through the Son of God, Jesus our Lord.'

As definitions go I thought these words spoke most eloquently about that capacity within us to respond to our Creator God, to be at the heart of our faith, to express our relationship with Almighty God through His Son Jesus.

Our Shared Vision - Prayer: continued...

Whatever the prayer group believe is right under God for us is what we will faithfully follow, believing that the Lord is guiding us. It seems highly likely that they will want to offer us some practical help. Bible teaching and the guidance of the Holy Spirit inform us and teach us but we have actually got to start 'doing' prayer more and more!

I wonder how many of us, indeed if anyone anywhere, feels that they pray enough? Surely do not most of us feel that we could and probably ought to pray more, or more effectively, or see more answers to our prayers than sometimes we seem to get!?

So how do we pray, and pray effectively? There will be the opportunity to find out more through the provision of a **Prayer Workshop** where in the safety of friends, and with the guidance of a leader we can ask any question we like, without any fears. We can be taught how to pray, be given helpful guidance and tips, and actually do some praying in a way that is right for us at this time.

Sometimes people value sharing with other Christians and receiving prayer, perhaps with the laying on of hands for healing and trusting that the Holy Spirit will minister His healing power among us, often into the deep wounds in people's lives. Seeing people healed and set free is a wonderful experience that glorifies God and builds up His church.

So we will be hosting a **Prayer Ministry Training Weekend**. We have invited a small team of Christians who have considerable experience in such a Ministry Team to come and lead a special weekend for us.

The focus of the training will be to equip those who feel called into this ministry, subject to the approval of our church leadership, to minister more effectively, both at Sunday services and in the encounters we have with other people. The Team will provide teaching and training, values and guidelines, and demonstrate theoretical and practical praying for one another.

So let's commit ourselves to praying more as we set out on this next exciting step in our journey of faith at St. Mary's. We don't need to wait for these any other developments to begin, we can start now, at home, quietly, just you and God.

May we all ask the Lord to make us increasingly passionate about prayer, so that He would be glorified and we would be used increasingly by Him to build His kingdom here in Andover.

New Churchwarden for St. Mary's

We offer our warmest congratulations to Nigel May who was elected to the post of Churchwarden at a Meeting of Parishioners on Sunday 20th November. Nigel will take up his responsibilities immediately, sharing these with our other faithful Churchwarden Gordon Bell. Churchwardens become members of the PCC from the date they are elected but become officers of the Bishop only after they take up this role, being admitted to their office, at a service known as the Archdeacon's Visitation.

As Nigel was elected at a special meeting, the Archdeacon has arranged with us an occasion when he can admit him to office. This will be at the 9am service on Sunday 8th January 2012 in St. Mary's Church. During the formal part of the procedure Nigel will have to make a public declaration, saying words such as 'I do solemnly and sincerely declare that I will faithfully and diligently perform the duties of the office of Churchwarden.'

Do please make every effort to show a solidarity and support for Nigel as he becomes an officer of the Bishop, and to express our determination to continue to develop our team as we face the new year together in Christ.

We also take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to Gordon who in his capacity as serving Churchwarden has shouldered many responsibilities in recent months. Gordon has quietly and faithfully served God and us through his ministry and we thank the Lord for him. So do please continue to hold both Churchwardens in your prayers, now and in the days ahead.

Article from our new Churchwarden

Following my election as Churchwarden on Sunday, John invited me to "pen" a few words so here goes!

The first thing I wanted to say is that I feel privileged to be chosen to support you as parishioners, support John and Sue and serve alongside Gordon - I really look forward to working with them as part of a team. It will be an honour to serve the people of St Mary's in this capacity – and thank you all for making us, and our children, so welcome over the last 10 months.

For those of you who may not know all our family secrets (!), Carrie and I have been married for 30 years and lived in Andover for the last 15. Our 4 children are all at various stages – suffice to say they still manage to spend quite a deal of time at home (despite allegedly leaving)!! From a work perspective I have experienced both the public sector (29 years in the Army) and private sector (6 years in Serco, a FTSE 100 international service company).

Article from our new Churchwarden - continued...

Carrie and I would probably describe ourselves as “mature” having been Christians all of our married life. Although baptised and confirmed within the Church of England, we have worshipped in a range of Anglican, Baptist and Independent Evangelical churches. During that time I have been involved with a number of leadership teams, run an Alpha course and also been extensively involved with a number of House/Home/Bible Groups.

From a spiritual perspective, I believe we (all of us not just some of us) have just begun an exciting (if somewhat scary!) journey of faith following the recent Vision day; I feel that, as the Body of Christ, we have heard from God and need to respond in obedience to the challenge(s) laid before us. The Book of Ecclesiastes talks about “*seasons under heaven*” and it does seem to me that this is a new opportunity and a new season for all of us (old to young) to be refreshed through the power of His Spirit.

I understand that Church of England Canon Law contains the following phrase when talking about Churchwardens “*they should use their best endeavours by example and precept to encourage the parishioners in the practice of true religion and to promote unity and peace among them*”. It is my fervent hope that, by the grace and mercy of God, this works out in practise and all of us, whatever our background, age, experience or role and whatever our preferences, likes and dislikes, can succeed together in “seeking God in worship, serving one another and showing God’s love to our community.”

Moving forward is a whole church activity that must involve everyone, not just the busy, enthusiastic or extrovert few!! 1 Corinthians Chapter 12 reminds us that we are “*one body, many parts*” and that “*each one of you is part of it*”. God has blest us with many individuals with many gifts for the building up of the church and it is my desire to see those gifts at work amongst us to the fullest extent.

In finishing I would like to share a verse that the Lord has regularly brought to my mind over the last few months from the start of Philipians Chapter 2 “*make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your interests but also to the interests of others.*”

Nigel May

Alex's Scripture Letter

Hi All,

One of my favourite hymns is probably one of the oldest that we sing at St. Mary's. "All people that on earth do dwell", usually credited to William Kethe, first found in the 1561 Anglo-Genevan Psalter. Kethe was a Scottish clergyman exiled in Switzerland at the time of the Scottish Reformation, yet so passionate was he in his faith that he still came up with the fantastic words to the hymn, which he based on a ten year old French tune, the "Old 100th". Kethe took the words of Psalm 100 and shifted the emphasis, from the Lord God, to the Trinitarian God of the New Testament.

I mention this only in passing with the brief message that Kethe took old source material, and turned it round to be fresh and modern for his day and age. Same source material, updated message.

This is the thought that strikes me year in, year out, when the Church prepares itself for a time of Advent and Christmas. How do we take the same source material and update the message? Over the next month or so, as St. Mary's we will be hosting a number of schools and putting on services of our own, again to celebrate the coming into this world of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour.

"We are His flock, He doth us feed,
And for His sheep He doth us take"

Words I'm sure you'll recognise from the hymn, above, words that to us in Andover in the 21st Century, look, let's be fair, a little bit outdated. But the message is just as relevant as its always been, since it was first written in verse 3 of Psalm 100. Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd in John 10:14, a metaphor I'm sure we are all familiar with. I find it interesting that at his birth and throughout his life, Jesus has close contact with shepherds, seemingly in keeping with the Psalm and the comfort that is also offered in the 23rd Psalm. I find the appearance of angels to simple Shepherds in Luke simply amazing. Here were very ordinary men, doing nothing out of the ordinary who were suddenly confronted with a revelation from God in the most extraordinary way possible - angels filled the sky! But the Shepherds didn't keep the news to themselves. They rushed to see the newborn child, offered him worship, then went praising and glorifying God for all he had done. First there was a revelation, and then there was a response.

As we approach Christmas this year, my prayer is that we would respond the way the Shepherds did, with praise and worship. The inclusion of Advent in the Church calendar gives us a yearly opportunity to revisit that

revelation that was shared on that first Christmas. The response however is up to us. Many carols sing about Christmas being a joyful time for a reason. It gives hope to many. I feel challenged when I hear words like that in songs, because I know that for many within and without our congregation, it can feel like the opposite, a time of rehashing old ground, feeling bored and in many cases, more alone. Perhaps unsurprisingly many look to the Church at this time to renew their hope and joy, even if it is as simple a thing as watching their child pretend to be an angel or donkey. We've all been there at some point or other. Help us as the people of St. Mary's in Andover, reach out to those who visit our church this year that we would not only tell the story of Jesus' birth, but for each of us to offer hope and joy to the community around, a community that is broken and hurting. The Shepherds were ordinary people, who encountered God and went around spreading an extraordinary message. Sound familiar? As mentioned previously, we have a fantastic opportunity for taking the source material and sharing it in a relevant way. Our God is a God who is the same yesterday, today and forever, as it says in verse 5 of Psalm 100, "His faithfulness continues through all generations". First the revelation and then comes the response. The source material is the same. It is up to us to present it in a way that is relevant to those outside the church, not for our sake, but for Jesus.'

The last verse of "All people on earth do dwell", the verse that Kethe did not take from Psalm 100 says this:

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below,
Praise Him above, ye heavenly hosts;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost"

First comes the revelation, and then comes the response. This year, rather than trying in vain "to get Christmas out the way", let us as God's people respond to the awesome message we've been given, of a God who loved his people so much that He came to earth in the person of His son, not to remain a baby, but to grow, share, and become saviour of this world. As we begin to respond to the three values of prayer, small groups and outreach that were shared at the Vision Day, let's use our services over Christmas as a starting point for this, to reach out to the lonely and the lost of Andover who visit us maybe once a year, seeking a message of hope. If we don't share this message through our welcome and our fellowship, who will?

Thanks,
Alex Peters
Worship Leader

The Friends of St. Marys 2011

On behalf of our President the Reverend Canon John Harkin, Chairperson Rosalyn Peszkowski and the Committee, may we wish all our members, friends and supporters a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

What a truly fulfilling year we have had; our "1st Saturday in each month" get togethers in the Church Centre, offers refreshments, friendship, nearly new table, books & bric-a-brac and of course our usual raffle. With the monies raised from these together with Wednesday morning service offerings, we have completed many projects enhancing our church, our worship and fellowship. We have supplied new service books early in the year, a new silver chalice together with a larger silver paten; a complete set of new altar linen, material purchased, made up from quite expensive Teflon coated linen and cotton lace trimmings (the Teflon coating helping to avoid staining and hopefully for them to last longer).

A complete new white china/porcelain tea service of 100 cups, saucers, some large plates, sugar bowls, jugs, spoons, teapots, and new hot water urn together with new kettles for use in the church kitchen.

Finally the completion and installation of the very beautiful Pentecost stained glass window, in June, now awaiting a plaque to complete the project.

We are always happy to welcome new members to join us, and throughout the year invite everyone to our meetings and social events.

In February after our AGM we were truly enriched by the talk given by Sue Harkin on her 'Life's Experiences' and her journey together with John. Those of us who were there, gratefully appreciated and enjoyed her talk, and openness in answering the many questions afterwards.

March was our time for a Lent Devotional Talk - given by Reverend James Mitchell-Innes on Boaz, near Winchester, set up to give practical help with everyday tasks for disadvantaged children and some adults. James was there at the very beginning and spent a few years offering help and advice and watching the remarkable development of this worthy organisation.

In April we had an Ecclesiastical Mystery coach tour, organised by Peter Hull. We were surprised and thrilled to have visited the churches in Malmesbury and Cirencester, when on returning to Cirencester we were made very welcome with refreshments and friendship. A truly inspiring day out.

The Friends of St. Marys 2011 - continued

In April we also joined the whole family of the church to share in the Agape Supper in the Harris Hall, a prayerful, inspiring experience with wonderful food too.

June - we had the service to celebrate the installation of the New Pentecost window, at which our Bishop presided, Miss Kate Allen (who donated this wonderful gift) and Deborah Lowe who made, transported, and installed the window, for us, was in attendance too, a wonderful celebration.

July - we made our annual coach trip to Weymouth, a favourite venue to enjoy sea air, good company, and sunshine! September too, another coach trip of 50+ people to Weston Super Mare also seaside resort, much enjoyed too.

October - The Friends organised and shared with the whole church family Harvest Supper, with fish & chips and a fun quiz, put together by Rosalyn, we all gave thanks for such a fun filled and enjoyable evening!

We give thanks for such fun filled and enjoyable times.

Our final event of the year is our **Christmas Fair**, in the **Harris Hall**, on **Saturday 10th December from 10am to 12 noon**.

Please come and join the festive spirit, with refreshments, many interesting stalls, East Street School colouring competition and many more contributions.

Let us share this very special time that celebrates our Lord being born to us and remember "It isn't the holly, it isn't the snow, it isn't the tree, nor the firelights glow. It's the warmth that comes from the hearts of men, when the Christmas spirit returns again."

A Happy Christmas and peaceful New Year to you all.

The Friends and the New Crockery!

We would like to express our gratitude to The Friends of St. Mary's for their generosity in purchasing the lovely new crockery, sugar bowls, milk jugs, tea spoons, an urn, teapots and kettles for the kitchen in the Church.

We now have a crockery set which we can add to as we go along. We are very grateful and send a large Thank You to The Friends.

HELP NEEDED!

St. Mary's Christmas Fair

The Friends of St. Mary's consistently fund raise for our church and in one way all of us who worship here ought to be a 'friend' helping to bring in whatever monies we can to beautify the building and honour our commitments as disciples of Christ.

The Christmas Fair on **Saturday 10th December** in the **Harris Hall**, from **10am to 12 noon**, provides all of us with the opportunity to do just that!

You can help by:

- Praying for a successful day
- Coming on the day to spend some money and enjoy fellowship
- Bake a cake for the cake stall - do please sign the list available if you are able to make/provide a cake and/or if you can help on the stall
- **Sue Harkin**
- Items for the tombola - box available in the church for donations
- **Stella Bruce-Kerr**
- Bric-a-brac - **Valda England**
- Table Decorations - **Pen Barnes-Gorell**
- Any 'good as new' items - **any volunteers for this stall please?**
- Donate some raffle prizes
- Volunteer to help with refreshments

Give of your time to promote the Christmas Fair, to offer to help in some way, to practical help in setting up and clear away, to play music, organize games or activities, any other ideas!

I'm sure many people who came last year had a great time whilst raising money for a good cause and this year promises to be even better. So put the date in your diary, set aside some time and help all of us enjoy **St. Mary's Christmas Fair!**

Support is needed, as are items for all the stalls. Posters and flyers will be available at the back of the church for distribution to family, friends and work colleagues etc.

For more information, and to give offers of help, please contact the church office.

An Opportunity for Giving

For 2011 the PCC decided that we ought to express our gratitude to the Lord for all He has done and continues to do for us, through some special giving this Christmas. Our biggest service during the year is our Christingle Service so please give generously so that we may give all the collection away to three charities working within our parish, Bridge That Gap, Food Bank, and the Crisis Centre. Additionally we are encouraging everyone in the build up to Christmas to be generous in giving food to the Food Bank. As God has blessed us, so let us express our thanks practically.

Worship Planning Group - Volunteers Needed!

Any volunteers who would like to join the Worship Planning Group, which meets once a month to plan for our Active All Age Worship services as well as one off dramas and interactive prayer times, you would be more than welcome to join our small but elite team as we continue to put these services on: practical help is just as useful as people with good imaginations!

Alex Peters

Christmas Day Lunch

The annual lunch for people who would otherwise be on their own on Christmas Day will be held in the Weyhill Fairground Hall from **12.30pm to 3.30pm**.

Neighbourcare are taking bookings from those who would like to attend as guests, and are pleased to receive offers from people who would prefer to volunteer to help. In addition, arrangements can be made to deliver a meal to anybody who would rather spend the day at home. Neighbourcare's telephone number is 01264 339899.

No one has to pay anything. The Andover Charity Trustees and Waitrose are contributing the necessary funding..

It is always a pleasant occasion for both guests and volunteers. I have been helping at the event for some twelve years. There are all sorts of jobs to be done - driving guests to and from the venue, receiving guests on arrival, waiting at the tables, helping in the kitchen with cooking, washing up, selling raffle tickets, etc. I feel it is a way of giving something back at Christmas for God's Great Gift, and His goodness to me personally.

June Harris

Visit to Uganda

One of the sights that is visible above the South Door as you leave the church is a wonderful banner from Emmanuel Cathedral in Arua, part of our link Diocese of Madi and West Nile in Uganda. Further to the visit from members of that Diocese to Andover Deanery in 2010, Bishop Joel Obetia has extended an invitation to members of our Deanery to visit his Diocese in 2012.

Four members of our parish, along with eleven other members of the benefices/parishes of the Andover Deanery, have taken up the Bishop's invitation and so from 15th to the 30th August next year, Canon John and Sue, June Harris and Barbara Marment will be visiting our link Archdeaonries in the Diocese in Uganda.

The visit offers opportunities to learn about the history, culture and context of Uganda, to visit projects run by the Diocese, to meet, spend time with, and worship with local Christians, to develop and strengthen new relationships, discovering and discerning new opportunities for developing our on-going links, to visit schools, hospitals and colleges in the area and for those who are going, the chance to be inspired and strengthened in their own faith and work. At the end of the trip there will be a day to see the wildlife and enjoy a boat ride on the Nile at Murchison Falls National Park.

Historically the Christian Church in this part of Uganda was planted by missionaries of Africa Inland Mission only in 1917. It quickly expanded as God's Holy Spirit touched the lives of many people with the good news of the gospel of Jesus and the Diocese of Madi/West Nile was created in 1969. The current Diocesan Bishop, the Right Reverend Dr Joel Obetia, who was consecrated and enthroned in November 2006, is the sixth Bishop of the Diocese which covers an area of about 250 km long and 80 km wide. The diocese has over 600 churches in about 130 Parishes, which are overseen by 11 Archdeaonries, and which have a combined church membership of about 556,300 Anglicans!

As we at St. Mary's Church are currently working on our vision under God, it is encouraging to read of the vision of the Diocese of Madi and West Nile, which is 'An empowered society living in obedience to God, trusting, loving and believing in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, joyfully serving Him on earth.'

Canon John, Sue, June and Barbara will keep you informed of their plans for the trip and will be grateful for your prayers and support as they prepare for this very special trip to our link Archdeaonry in Uganda.

New Bishop of Winchester

The Reverend Canon Timothy Dakin will be Inaugurated and Enthroned as the Bishop of Winchester at a special service on Saturday 21st April 2012. The service will be held in Winchester Cathedral at 2.30pm and there will be refreshments served afterwards.

This will be a significant day in the life of the Diocese and Canon Tim would very much like as many clergy, readers and parishioners as possible to be present at this most important occasion for him, his family and the Diocese.

Admittance to the Cathedral will be by ticket only, with the exception of a small area of unreserved seating. If you would like to attend the service and support the new Bishop and his family, then please give your name to the Parish Administrators by Sunday 15th January 2012, at the latest.



St. Mary's Singers

For those who don't know, the St. Mary's Singers is a group of individuals within our church community who are occasionally called upon to sing for weddings and other events. Any level of singing is welcome, and ability to read music is not required. We are going to be singing at this year's Carols by Candlelight service at 7pm on the 18th December. There will be rehearsals beforehand which will be run by Tom Etherton, one of our resident organists. If you would be interested in joining the St. Mary's Singers for helping with weddings or for the Carol Service, please leave a message with the Parish Office.

Many thanks, *Alex Peters* Worship Leader

St. Marys Church Christmas Card

With the agreement of Canon John, James Bruce-Kerr has made a large Christmas Card to help raise funds for St. Marys. The idea is that, rather than buying lots of cards for all our friends at church, we can sign the card which is at the back of the church and put a donation in the box.

Diocese of Winchester e-news

Follow the link below to access Issue number one of the brand new e-news bulletin from the Diocese of Winchester:

<http://bit.ly/thenewsNov11>

Little Saints

Little Saints is the children's group that has just started, for which help will be greatly appreciated. Clothes suitable for dressing up are requested, such as items that would make cloaks or tunics for Biblical characters, for children up to 8 years old. We also need toy human characters to be included in the Story Bags for use by parents with very small children. Please see Liz Medley for more information or refer to the new Little Saints notice board at the back of church.

Boaz Nativity Carol Service

The Boaz Nativity Carol Service with the Salvation Army Band will be held at **7pm** on **Friday 2nd December** in the old barn at Boaz, and will be followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies.

No tickets needed.



Monthly Rota and Visitors

More volunteers are needed to help with readings, prayers and refreshments on the monthly rota.

If you would like to help, please let the Administrators know.

Also, if anyone can spare an hour or so each week to welcome visitors into church on weekday mornings, such help would be greatly appreciated.

WHAT'S ON



Mid Week Parish Communion

The dates in December are: **Wednesday 7th, 14th, and 21st** all in St. Mary's Church Chapel at 10.30am. **Please note there will be no service on 28th December** but our services will resume on **Wednesday 4th January 2012**. All are welcome to join us and to stay for fellowship and refreshments afterwards. If you know of anyone who would value receiving Holy Communion in their home, please contact the Parish Office.

Parish Prayers

One of the key areas of God's Vision for us is that we have identified most strongly is that of Prayer. Do please join us therefore on **Thursday 1st December and Thursday 5th January at 7.30pm** in the Church Centre for an **hour of prayer** together. All are most welcome.

St. Mary's Walking Group

Kevin and Katie's next walk is after the 10.30am service on **5th February 2012**. So keep your backpack, walking shoes and a picnic ready and enjoy the break over Christmas and New Year!!

Archdeacon Michael Harley

will be joining us at our 9am service of Holy Communion on **Sunday 8th January** when he will admit Nigel May to the office of Churchwarden. Do please pray for Nigel and for Gordon, our two churchwardens.

Christingle Factory

The Christingle Factory will be on **Friday 23rd December at 6.30pm** in the **Church Centre** this year and anyone is welcome to come and help. We hope to have some pizza as well as lots of fun.



St. Mary's Church Youth Groups meet on

Tuesday (11-14 years old)
and
Wednesday (15+)
at the **Revolution Cafe**

For information contact the church office.

Office Closures

Please note that the St. Mary's Parish Office will be **closed:**
on **19th and 20th December 2011**
and from **26th December 2011 to 2nd January 2012**