



The Beacon

February 2012

The monthly newsletter of St. Mary's Church

www.stmarys-andover.org.uk

**We are a community of faith that SEEKS God in worship
SERVES one another and SHARES the love of Jesus**

For Your Prayers

- For Little Saints and their leaders
- For Tim Tayler, a Reader in Training, who is with us for a term
- For inspiration as we continue to discern God's will for the unfolding vision for St. Mary's through Working Groups for Small Groups, Outreach and Prayer
- For those leading the Wedding Preparation Evening later this month
- For those in Andover who are suffering from homelessness, poverty, debt and other forms of crisis

Editorial

A Happy New Year and welcome to February's copy of The Beacon, which reverts to the normal one-month spread. As well as the usual information, in it you will find the following:

- Information on the Reader in Training who is placed with St. Mary's
- News of our new website
- Update on Little Saints
- A poem by Lisanne Frewin
- A look ahead to Easter

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

March Beacon

The deadline for articles to appear in February's edition of The Beacon is **Friday 17th February**, so that this can be made available for Sunday 26th February. Ideally, please email bazires@tiscali.co.uk. Many thanks.

Martin B

From the Reverend Canon John Harkin

Dear friends

Historical records show that Jesus was put on trial by local authorities in the Middle East approx 2,000 years ago and sentenced to death by crucifixion. After being mocked, spat upon and beaten by soldiers, after a crown of thorns was hammered into His skull, after carrying His own cross up a hill, He was nailed to it, and hung up to die.

As He hung there the leaders of the religious establishment mocked Him. "He saved others" they said "but He can't save Himself! He's the King of Israel! Let Him come down from the cross and we will believe Him!"

I wonder if any of us think we are so different today from those who mocked Jesus and drove nails through His hands and feet? For when we reflect on such questions we begin to truly appreciate what Jesus did for us when He died in our place on that cross for our sins.

For much of its history the United States of America has not been so united, indeed for many years American society was sadly segregated by racism. From schools to buses, public restrooms to drinking fountains, restaurants to churches, the country was divided into black and white. Hospitals were amongst the last institutions to desegregate and the reason why was because many people thought that if they had to have a blood transfusion they might get the "wrong" blood!

Simply amazing, isn't it! And we're talking here only about 80 years ago! People genuinely feared that if they received blood from a person of another colour or ethnicity, they might actually develop the characteristics of that race.

That all changed when Dr Charles Drew came along. In the 1930's Dr Drew created a new medical process that we now use to make plasma. Plasma comes from blood but it is not what is called type-specific, which means that it can be used to treat any patient who is bleeding badly without the need for new whole blood. Dr Drew's discovery was so special that he was asked to head up the Blood for Britain Campaign during World War 2.

After the war had ended Dr Drew founded the American blood bank which is still in operation today. In 1950 Dr Drew was himself badly injured in a car accident and was taken to a hospital where he received the best of treatment but sadly died of his injuries.

Imagine if the hospital that he had arrived at had not been desegregated - since Dr Drew was a black man, he would have bled to death. How tragic that would have been.

Through ignorance or apathy or simple prejudice or for whatever reason, at the time segregation was for many people, the norm. It is perhaps only with hindsight that we can appreciate the injustice of racism.

Because public opinion and policy has changed we may believe that we are different people from the people of America in 1950 as we cling to the belief that we would have behaved in a more caring manner than those who turned people of a different race of colour away during their time of need - but can we be sure?

It is the same as asking ourselves, Am I any different today than those who mocked Jesus and drove nails through His hands and feet?

If we were there in that context, in that culture of those days, in that crowd, urged on by religious and political leaders, would I have recognised Jesus for who He truly is? Would I have decided to put my faith in Jesus and made Him Lord and Saviour of my life?

I cannot speak for them but certainly for myself I know that there is a reality that comes from a relationship with God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So may I encourage you, urge you, to consider and re-consider what it means to be a Christian today, and see the relevance of that lived out in a fullness of life, today, next week, next year.

As our Shared Vision here at St. Mary's gathers pace, as we begin to excitedly tease out our aims and strategies for the future mission and ministries, may we all decide to put Jesus at the very centre of our lives, in every single area.

Following Jesus, being His disciple, will help us lay aside our prejudices, to see the world more clearly through His eyes of love, forgiveness and compassion, and to continue build a community where everyone matters and everyone is valued.

Canon John

Reader in Training Placement

Readers play a vital role in the life and witness of the Church, exercising a fully trained and recognised ministry. They lead many types of worship, preach and teach, visit pastorally, prepare people for baptism or confirmation and represent the Church in many ways.

In the Winchester Diocese, during the second term of their third year, those in training are required to spend an academic term in another parish, usually one of a different churchmanship or tradition to the home parish where they may often be based to serve. Indeed one of the aims of the placement is to engage the student in theological reflection in such a context.

During the Spring Term this year I know St. Mary's will extend a warm welcome to Tim Taylor, who joins us for his first Sunday on 29th January. Tim writes of himself: "I'm a 60 year old Hampshire Hogg who grew up on the Isle of Wight. I joined the Army on leaving school and spent the latter half of my career working in the MOD logistics headquarters at Andover. My wife Jill and I have lived in Abbots Ann for 15 years where I feel called to serve as a Reader. Our three grown up children live in Cardiff or London and we have two young granddaughters. I have retired from full-time employment but my Reader training, work as the Parish Council archivist and gardening, keep me fully occupied."

Tim will spend at least 8 weeks with us, including Sundays up to and including Easter Day. He will be present at, and where appropriate engage in, as many areas of our ministry as possible, including one preaching engagement with us.

I will be introducing Tim at our 10am United Parish Communion Service on 29th January so do please make the most of the opportunities over the coming weeks to get to know Tim and to welcome him into the church family here at St. Mary's.

Canon John

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.

www.stmarys-andover.org.uk

We take this opportunity to express our deep thanks to Alan Roberts for his prodigious and highly professional commitment to creating a new and exciting website for St. Mary's Church.

Alan has worked tirelessly over many months to continually modify and update the site which currently portrays an excellent, well informed site in a clear and attractive format.

In today's world many people access much of their knowledge online and to have a portal into this environment can be a great blessing to Christian churches just the same as any other organisation. In our website's first month Alan recorded the following information:

We had 1,003 visits to the website, some people visiting more than once, so in the end we had 709 different people visit the site.

Our highest number of visits was on the 24th December, with 106 visits for that day.

We averaged 32 visits a day for the month.

The top 5 pages that were viewed were:

- 1) Home Page, 2) Christmas Services Page, 3) Worship Services Page,
- 4) About Us Page and 5) Contact Us Page

So in just one month over 700 people have been reading about the life and witness of this community of faith here at St. Mary's Church. When Alan provided these figures he said "The site is getting viewed more that I would have expected, so that is good news. Even if a quarter of the people who looked at the site did not attend St. Mary's perhaps it will help them to consider St. Mary's moving forward."

Do please use the website yourself. The Beacon, The Grapevine, Diary Dates, monthly service rota as well as recordings of the sermons are all there! Any suggestions or ideas for the website are warmly welcomed.

Electoral Roll - Advance Notice

Each year the Electoral Roll is updated. This year will see the normal revision process, formally starting with the Roll being displayed from Sunday 17th March. Meanwhile, I am happy to receive application forms from those not on the roll. Do see me if you need a form. I will give more details in next month's Beacon.

Martin B Electoral Roll Officer

Little Saints

One term into our new programme and the leaders of Little Saints are feeling very blessed. We have settled into a good strong team, each bringing our own strength to the programme. I would like to thank Charlotte Bruce-Kerr for all her help in setting up Little Saints, and James Bruce-Kerr for stepping in and taking over from Charlotte, and bringing such enthusiasm with him.

We have learned about Moses in Super Stars, but still have more to go before the programme is complete. It is amazing how much, as adults, we have learned by following the journey through the eyes of the children.

Little Lights have learned about friendships with Naomi and Ruth and trusting God with David as he became king, and having to say sorry and be forgiven by God. This term they will learn more about trusting God through Hezekiah and continuing the theme of building a relationship with God through Jeremiah.

Our Lights Party, organized by Chris Lawton, was a wonderful afternoon with 25 children from local schools attending. A follow up invitation to the December Active All Age Service was sent to all the children, and several families came to join us. I pray that some may feel encouraged to continue to come to Active All Age Services.

Little Saints invited the Mustard Seed Group to join us for two Christmas activities mornings, and we did welcome one member of the group.

We have grown as a group over the term, welcoming back Chloe, and joined now by her brother Alfie, and joined by two new comers to St. Mary's, Harry and Pippa. Chris Lawton, Stella and James Bruce-Kerr and I are attending a Diocesan run Marketplace event at the end of January, with choices of seminars and resource material for viewing. It should be a good day, are looking forward coming back even more enthusiastic and full of new and exciting ideas.

Finally I feel truly blessed to be leading the team, and following the Vision Day feel we are truly meeting all 3 sections of the vision. We all feel supported by prayer, and are very much prayer led. We are helping the children to learn prayers, and to learn to talk to God about all things. We are a small group, but are looking for opportunities for more outreach to the children who attend local schools and playgroups I would ask that you continue to pray for us in this New Year.

Thank you and may God bless you all.

Liz Medley

Grace

As I walk out from this holy place
I know in my heart I do not merit
Any special treatment, any special love.
But I have received, in humility and faith,
A gift from Almighty God - His loving Grace.

Let me then show my Lord, by how I live,
That I bear fruit for Jesus of Nazareth
In ways that will bring glory to His Name;
Showing to this sinful world that I am His;
Walking in the footsteps that He did leave.

Help me, Lord, to follow His righteous way
Doing the best I can to be a true disciple;
As willing, as forgiving as He, giving my life,
My heart, my soul, my all, into His service;
And, with love and joy, for His peace I pray.

Unworthy sinner, human, frail, just as I am,
Before the Father I can come, to the Holy God;
One God, Loving, Gracious, Merciful and Mighty,
Spirit of Peace, Giver of Life, Creator and Judge;
I can claim, by His Grace, to be saved by the Lamb.

Inspired by a sermon from Reverend Canon John Harkin, St. Mary's Church, Andover, Hampshire, UK, 8 May 2011

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The Vision Working Groups

The Small Groups and Outreach Working Groups met for the first time by 26th January. The first meeting of the Prayer Working Group is at **7.30pm** on **31st January** in the Church Centre. All are welcome to come along. We aim to include articles on these first meetings in the March edition of The Beacon.

Putting Jesus back into Easter

It's hard to believe that, out of the whopping 80 million chocolate Easter Eggs sold each year, not one of them mentions Jesus on the box - until now! The Real Easter Egg gives churches their first ever chance to buy an Easter Egg that explains the Christian understanding of Easter on the pack and gives money to charity and development projects. In early 2011 churches were asked to mail order a supply of Real Easter Eggs. The aim was to prove demand so that in future years, people would have the choice of buying the egg from their local shop. Over 50,000 eggs were ordered in the first 12 weeks of the egg being on sale and shops began placing orders when they saw what was happening. The Real Easter Egg donated more than £4,000 to Baby Lifeline in 2011 and more than £21,000 to Traidcraft exchange.

The Real Easter Egg will retail this year at £3.99 and are available online, as well as from some retail shops including Waitrose and the Fair Trade Shop at Weyhill Fairground. Canon John has spoken with the Manager at the Waitrose store in Andover, who sold out of all their stock of the Real Easter Egg last year. He was very supportive and has assured Canon John they will be ordering extra stock this year!

THANK YOU!

To Stella Bruce-Kerr for her idea to have a Christmas Card in church that members of our fellowship could sign to other members of the Church, donating the money we saved from buying and posting individual cards. She produced a wonderful home made card, raising £68.76 for the church.

Our thanks also go to all those who attended and gave so generously at our Christingle Service. The collection was £585 which was equally divided between the three Charities that are based here in the parish:

Andover Food Bank provides food for local people in crisis

Bridge That Gap which offers free and confidential advice on benefits and debt problems, and

The Crisis Centre, a hostel for women, and women with children, in need of a supportive environment and a telephone and drop in information, advice, support and counselling service for those in need locally

In the Bible, in Acts 20:35 we read *"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."*

So thank you, your actions speak louder than words in helping those in need to be better resourced and enabled.

Andover Unity Group present The Passion of Jesus

Andover's High Street will once again this year become a theatre on Good Friday as Christians from many of the churches across Andover and beyond, come together to highlight the significance and meaning of Good Friday and Easter.

Good Friday begins with an Andover Churches Together Service at St. Mary's Church at 10am. This is followed by a March of Witness before the enactment of The Passion of Jesus which will take place in the town centre and on a large stage area in front of the Guildhall. The actors make use of the whole town centre as the play included scenes at the Time Ring, around the High Street and on the cobbles outside the Guildhall.

The acting out of the Passion is a powerful and evocative re-enactment of the events that first Easter and last year it was quite moving to see so many shoppers and visitors to the town, really engage with the drama that was unfolding in front of them. A professionally produced, well directed and acted out presentation, with excellent sound and vision, is a very significant medium to communicate the gospel to our twenty first century culture.

If you would like to help in any way, practically as well as in the production itself, please contact the Unity Group's director Sharon O'Leary on 01264 324196 or email sharon.oleary1@btinternet.com.

Welcome to St. Mary's - or is it?!

One part of our shared Vision, in the area of Small Groups, will be to offer training so that we can grow in practical understanding and techniques to help us be even more welcoming to visitors to our church.

On **Saturday 25th February**, from 10am to 12.30pm at St. Peter's Church, Over Wallop, there will be a seminar entitled 'Turning First Time Visitors into Long Term Members.' This event is sponsored although donations of £5 would be welcome and covers the following:

- The reasons people don't come back a second time
- The Ten Keys to keeping
- The Seven Phrases that turn away
- Turning failure into a friend
- Back to what? From Simon to Simon Peter
- 12 steps learning tool (How to double your congregation in a day)

Please take one of the leaflets at the back of church and let the Church Administrators know if you would like to attend.

**Ordination and Consecration
of Canon Tim Dakin as the 97th Bishop of Winchester Designate**

A coach full of excited members of the Diocese set off at 7.15am on the morning of 25th January, the Feast of the Conversion of Paul, to make their way to St. Paul's Cathedral in London to join with over 2,200 other worshippers for a very special occasion. At this service two priests were made bishops and it was a wonderful experience for the 13 members of St. Mary's who joined the hundreds from across the Diocese as Canon Tim was made a bishop. The building is magnificent and lent itself so well to the occasion as many bishops came to support their two new colleagues.

The service was conducted by the Archbishop of Canterbury assisted by the Bishop of London, and the Bishop of Chelmsford gave a powerful address. After the service there was the opportunity to enjoy some lunch, meet up with family or explore this magnificent building as so many of us did, before the coach arrived to take us home. Do please pray for this new chapter in the life of our Diocese as Bishop Tim has spoken of his desire for us to "live the mission of Jesus."

Bishop Tim will become the Bishop of Winchester at a Service of Enthronement in Winchester Cathedral on 21st April.

From the Diocese of Winchester e-news:

97th Bishop Consecrated at St Paul's

A near-capacity St. Paul's congregation saw prayerful hands laid on Canon Tim Dakin as he became a Bishop on Wednesday 25th January.

See all the photos here: <http://www.cofewinchester.org.uk/news/story/147/>

Scrap cash success as Parliament passes bill

Paying cash for scrap metal will be outlawed, Home Secretary Theresa May has announced in a written statement to MPs. She also told them that fines would be 'significantly increased' to tackle the growing problem of metal theft.

Anne Sloman, Chair of the Church of England's Cathedral and Church Buildings Council, said: "This is excellent news. The Church has campaigned for a long time for legislation to outlaw cash transactions for scrap metal. We are still suffering the theft of lead from 10 church roofs a day, and every weapon the Government and the police can use to help us combat this crime is greatly to be welcomed."

For the Winchester Diocese website see: <http://www.cofewinchester.org.uk/>

WHAT'S ON



Mid Week Parish Communion

The dates in February are: **Wednesdays 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd** in St. Mary's Church Chapel and **Wednesday 29th February, the last Wednesday of the month**, is in the Church Centre Chapel. All are very welcome to join us at 10.30am 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 Church Office.

Parish Prayers

One of the key areas of God's Vision for us is that we have identified most strongly the theme of Prayer. Do please join us therefore on **Thursday 2nd February at 7.30pm** in the Church Centre for an hour of prayer together so our collective prayers may be all the more effective.

The Friends of St. Mary's

On **Saturday 4th February** all are invited to the FOSM Coffee Morning from 10am in the Church Centre, as well as to the Annual General Meeting at 12 noon on the same day. All are warmly 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 fresh air, exercise and fellowship.

The Friends of St. Mary's

invite you to join them for a **Pancake Supper** at the Church Centre on Shrove Tuesday 21st February at 4.30pm. No need to book, just turn up and enjoy the pancakes!

Ash Wednesday Service

We will mark the start of Lent this year with two services in church:

Holy Communion at 10.30am Ash Wednesday Service at 7pm on 22nd February

Do please make the most of these opportunities to come and reflect, and commit yourself to a Lenten discipline. There are two basic disciplines, one is adding something to your life, and the other is giving something up. Examples might include fasting, giving in some manner of time or resources and the whole area of prayer and spirituality. Our services on Ash Wednesday will allow some quiet space and time to allow you to hear what Jesus Christ is saying to you personally. **'Be still, and know that I am God'** Psalm 46:10.