

the Link

**The Methodist Church of
Leatherhead
Cobham
Effingham**

December 2010



Family Link



Our thoughts and prayers are with...

Ron Platt undertaking weekly radiotherapy treatment.

Congratulations to...

Jay Bristow on gaining his degree in Youth and Community studies with Applied Theology.
(See page 13)



Our grateful thanks to...

Gill Harris, stepping down from helping at LMC Discoverers (Junior Church, Sunday School) after 34 years (and previously at Stoneleigh Methodist Church for 11 years).



To all readers and contributors ...

all good wishes for a very happy Christmas and a prosperous, fulfilling and happy New Year. Thank you to those who have supported The Link for the past twelve months.

Editor

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The Ministers Write...



From Rev. Ian Howarth

Dear friends,

I sometimes get frustrated that people tend to assume that Christmas is the most important part of the Christian year. If I had a pound for every time someone outside the Church says to me over Christmas: "This must be your busiest time of year", I would be a rich man. I am trying to learn to say to that: "No, Easter is both busier and a more important time for Christians" but I am afraid sometimes my courage fails me.

Both Easter and Pentecost are arguably more central to our faith than Christmas. In the Bible the birth stories only appear in two gospels, and are not referred to elsewhere in the New Testament, and if we are not careful the long Christmas celebrations and many Christmas services can try and load it with a theological weight that it struggles to bear.

Before you all say that I have become Scrooge-like, let me hasten to add that I love the magic of Christmas, the Christmas stories, the Christmas music, and the sense of the whole nation having a day of celebration. But as Christians we do have to be careful not to see Christmas in isolation, or as the central part of our faith. St. Paul did not preach Christ born in a stable, he preached Christ crucified and risen. We need to hold on to that.

But, of course, he could not be crucified and risen if he had not first been born. It is right that we celebrate a God who does not love us from a distance, but who becomes one of us, to share His love by sharing our joys and sorrows, who becomes a vulnerable child, and who needs the love of a human family.

These are great things to celebrate and to sing about. I had a great time one Christmas when the Jehovah's Witnesses arrived on my doorstep to tell me that Christmas was just a pagan ritual that real Biblical believers, like them, should have nothing to do with. "Don't you want to celebrate the good news that God has come to earth in his Son Jesus? Don't you want to rejoice that he has come to share his love with us in person?" I almost shouted at them. They beat a hasty retreat, and I haven't had a visit from them since!

But we cannot celebrate Christmas in isolation. This world that God sent his son to, is still a world that excludes those who don't fit, still a world that longs to hear the angels' song of 'Peace on Earth', still a world that Jesus had to die for, to offer the hope of a new creation, of new life and it is still a world that continues to need the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

Without Easter and Pentecost, even the traditional 'religious' Christmas remains little more than a nice story for the children, not that far removed from Santa Claus and Rudolf the Red Nosed Reindeer.

Continued on the next page

Page 3

Seen as part of the full story of Christ's incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection, it is the first chapter in a story that truly changes lives and offers hope to the world.

May you know the true joy of Christ the Saviour come to you, this Christmas.

Yours in Christ, *Ian*

From Rev. Kim Plumpton

Dear Friends,

As we move into the season of advent my mind wanders to a scene from the Vicar of Dibley (TV series), as Alice the trusted vergger shares in her excitement at the prospect of the vicar's Christmas sermon. Having totally forgotten the vicar's previous Christmas sermon, the conversation continues:

Alice: " Not your fault vicar, you probably chose a boring subject."

Vicar: "The birth of Jesus Christ, otherwise known as the greatest story ever told?!!!"

Alice: "Yeah, the first time you hear it, but after that it's a bit predictable isn't it. Man and woman get to inn. Inn full. Woman has baby. Baby in a manger. Angels sing on high, blah, blah, blah, blah."

Vicar: "You forget to mention that the baby is in fact the Son of God."

Alice: "Well yes.... That's a nice twist."

As much as we may well feel this is a superficial reflection on the Christmas story it does identify a common phenomenon. How easy it is to go through the motions of Christmas without truly engaging with the real story, without even being shaken by the truth of the incarnation.

Of course there is an expectation during the Christmas season of Christmas carols and children's nativities amongst other things and I would never want to lose sight of such treasured events within the church, but 'that nice twist' Alice shares with us is often obscured by the familiar.

Lives that were once quite ordinary are transformed into the extraordinary as we witness to God moving and preparing those who will become key players in a world searching for a Messiah. As we wait in anticipation of the divine, our expectations of Christ's coming are varied and yet in the simplicity of Christ's birth the world is transformed by the humble beginnings of God entering into the world. Uniting hearts, crossing boundaries, challenging our perceptions of Justice and righteousness.

"The greatest story ever told?" most certainly. I pray for us all that this Christmas we may allow Christ to enter into our hearts in ways that allow us to enjoy Christmas with a renewed sensitivity. Open to a story that is never lost amongst the Christmas presents and the tinsel but in ways that join all the festivities together with Christ at the centre.

May peace reign this Christmas and God's compassion find expression in everything we do and say.

With every blessing,

Kim



Cobham

Cobham Diary - December



Sun	5th	11.00am	Mrs Clair Fisher
Sat	11th	7.30pm	CCE Social Evening (<i>see below</i>)
Sun	12th	10.50am	Miss Angie Choat
Sat	18th	2.30pm	Platinum Christmas Party, Cobham Village Hall
Sun	19th	11.00am 6.00pm	Rev Kim Plumpton - Holy Communion Rev Kim Plumpton - United Carol Service at the URC
Fri	24th	10.30am	Crib Service, at the URC
Sat	25th	11.00am	United Christmas Day Service at the URC
Sun	26th	11.00am	United Service at the URC

Cobham & Effingham Methodist Churches
with Cobham URC

CHRISTMAS PARTY **11th December at 7.30pm** **at Cobham Methodist Church**

Please bring party food/soft drinks and a party piece (optional) to share. There will be games, and we will finish with candlelit carols around the Christmas Tree.

Further details from Rhonda Frost.

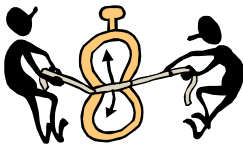


Effingham

Effingham Diary - December



Wed	1st	8.00pm	Christian Meditation in the Church
Sun	5th	9.30am	Rev Kim Plumpton - Holy Communion
Sun	12th	10.30am	Mr Alex Cloke
Mon	13th	5.30-7pm	Effingham Shops Christmas Event
Tues	14th	2.30pm	Tuesday Tea in the R. C. Hall
Wed	15th	8.00pm	Christian Meditation in the Church
Sun	19th	10.00am	Carol Service led by Mrs Freddie Jenkins
Mon	20th	7pm-9pm	Carol Singing around village for CRISIS
Sat	25th	9.30am	Christmas Day with Rev Kim Plumpton
Sun	26th	10.30am	United Service at Cobham URC
Wed	29th	8.00pm	Christian Meditation in the Church



Please note Service times this month
and remember ALL Chapel Services
next year will be at 10 o'clock

Dates to celebrate this month

Happy Birthday to Joan Dawson on 20th



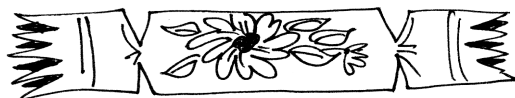
Dates for your diaries

Why not do December differently... and join us on 23rd & 30th November, 7th & 14th December at 7.30pm for 8.00pm start in the Chapel for an ecumenical Advent study programme, led by members of local churches including Kim.

Carol Singing in Effingham



Please bring a brolly, warm coats and join us at our church hall on Monday 20th December at 7.00pm for our annual Churches Together **Carol Singing** around Effingham in aid of the homeless charity, **CRISIS**. Mince-pies in the hall at 9.00pm. Offers of mince-pies gratefully received.



"God Bless us, Everyone !"

Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" is my favourite book to read at this time of the year.

Tiny Tim had the right idea. Poor and lame he still felt blessed because of his belief in God, his loving family, and the eventual triumph of goodness.

Dave and I love Christmas, and will be over-indulging in fun, food and plenty of sloppy movies with friends and relatives. So we're wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

AP

***CHRISTMAS
CELEBRATION
AT THE SHOPS
MONDAY
13th DECEMBER
5.30 – 7.00pm.***

Father Christmas

Tombola

Mulled Wine

St Lawrence School Children
singing at 6.00 p.m.

Raffle - Draw at 7.00 p.m.

BBQ

Christmas Music & Carols

All proceeds in aid of
The Grange Centre

BABY SCAN JESUS POSTER



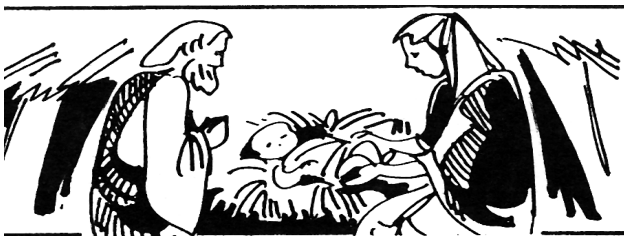
This year, as part of their Christmas campaign, the Christian advertising agency churchads.net has launched an iconic poster. You may remember their eye-catching "Bus Shelter Nativity" a couple of years ago ! Well the 2010 poster is a baby-scan of Jesus with a halo. It is based on the fact that, in the 21st century, proud parents-to-be announce the coming birth by showing friends and family the scan of the baby. So the *Baby Scan Jesus* poster uses this convention to place the birth of Christ in an "ultra-contemporary" context. It aims to show both the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ, and capture people's attention, generate headlines and create countless conversations about the true meaning of Christmas.

Apparently research has revealed that 85% of people agree with the statement that "Christmas should be called Christmas because we are still a Christian country". But it also shows that only 12 per cent of adults know the facts of the Christmas story in any detail. So if we Christians really want to keep Christmas focused on Christ, we must constantly re-tell the story of his birth in ways which engage positively with the public's interest.

[Church leaders](#) across the denominations have welcomed the campaign and are urging churches all over the country to get involved. Posters are now the most effective way of conveying a message to a mass audience and getting that message onto the public's conversational agenda. A national poster campaign featuring a common message is also, in itself, a powerful demonstration of Christian unity and shared purpose in Christ.

The campaign aims to reach 40 million people with posters in prominent sites all over the country and with [radio commercials](#) on 200 stations. Get involved by downloading a free poster from their website: churchads.net which is a registered charity.

AJP



Community Engagement

Key Area of Mission Working Group

As many of you will know, our friends at St Mary and St Nicholas with All Saints have been through a process of developing a Parish Vision, culminating at a meeting in May 2010. At that meeting, "Engagement with the Community" was one of seven Key Areas of Mission which emerged. A working group consisting of Tim Hall, John Swanson, Anne Thomson, Doug Waters, Steve Whiting and Graham Osborne, was formed to develop a Mission Statement, Goals and Action Plan for this area of church life. The Working Group has met twice and we have added Jane Smith, Uniting Churches Family and Children's Worker, to our membership.

We recognise that community engagement should be (and increasingly often is) something that we undertake as Uniting Churches. So we are in the process of widening the remit of the Group and ensuring that its membership is representative of all three Churches. This article is to report on work so far and seek church members' views about areas on which we should focus.

Initially, we have focussed on mapping out the considerable extent to which the churches, either corporately or through individual members, are already involved in the community. The next steps will be to consider how what the churches offer should best be publicised, and then to identify gaps and think about how to fill them.

From our own knowledge, the Group compiled the following list of community activities in which church members are involved. We would be very grateful for any comments, particularly if you can see any glaring errors or omissions. Please get in touch with a member of the Working Group.

Pre-school

Trinity Children's Centre, Toddler Groups, Time for Tea, Messy Church

Primary School age

Leatherhead Trinity School, Messy Church,
Holiday Club, Triumph, Bugs Club,
Beavers/Cubs/Brownies

Secondary School age

Leatherhead Youth Project, BFree, Total Football, MTB (mountain biking), Bliss (girls), Blaze (boys), Triumph pm, Dance classes, Express Art, Music Workshops, 5-a-Day meals, Freestyle (weekends away),
Scouts/Guides

Disabled

Seeability (including Talking Parish Magazine), Shopmobility,
Queen Elizabeth's Foundation - Dorincourt , Headley Court,
Combat Stress, Leatherhead Hospital Ward Service

Older People

Age UK/Age Concern, Leatherhead & District Friends Group – meets monthly at BFree, The Beeches (monthly Communion service; musical entertainment), Second Sunday Lunches.

Other groups

Pitstop, Night Hostel (temporarily relocated to Dorking), Clubhouse, Samaritans (not known whether any church members currently involved), Leatherhead United Charities (Church nominated trustees), Men’s Breakfast, Mothers’ Union, Leatherhead Community Association, Liquid Connection and The Bridge (both have links with LYP), Therfield (some connections), Young Carers , Light up Leatherhead, Remembrance Sunday - Royal British Legion, Town Twinning Association - Friends of Triel, Credit Union.

Christmas Cards

This is the time we give cards to greet friends within the Church family. The “alphabet” box will be at the back of the Church for individual people. There will also be a space cleared on the board for those who prefer to give one card for all, and the usual charity Christmas Stockings will be there too for donations. This year there will be only two, one for LYP and the other for MAF.

LYP - Leatherhead Youth Project - needs little explanation. It does “what it says on the tin”! The money gives tremendous help to take forward all the great ideas within the project, either on-going or in the pipeline, to enhance what is on offer with a Christian background, for local young people.

MAF - Mission Aviation Fellowship - was written about by John Rogers at Effingham in the November “Link”. To quote briefly from that article: “MAF is a Christian charity which is well organised to employ dedicated pilots who operate small aircraft in developing countries to inaccessible places where road travel is extremely difficult... bring missionaries, Bible translators, medical teams and food supplies” - and much more. Please re-read the article on page 14 of the November Link, or the leaflets near the stockings. MAF is also the charity supported by the District Women’s Network and such giving is now the only way LMC can support WN and the good work it continues to do.

Jean Plant

Leatherhead Youth Project

After three years of hard work and with the support of the Leatherhead churches, Jay Bristow graduated on 13 October. He gained a 2:1 degree in Youth and Community studies with applied theology from the Centre for Youth Ministry (CYM) affiliated with Oxford Brookes University.



Next Messy Church:

Thursday 20th January
(No Messy Church in December)

3.30pm to 5.30pm at

LMC

Prayer Stones

Early in November during a morning service, Ian distributed small stones to everyone in the congregation as a prayer focus. Not everyone finds such things a useful aid, but then we are all different in our approach to prayer.

Mine has joined others that I have collected on many occasions over the years. The collection includes not only stones, but a nail (an Easter image) beads from Gibraltar, an origami crane (from Germany), paper butterflies and many doves. It was good to look at them all and remember, especially those with words written on them.

My very first stone was not specifically for prayer. It was an item from many on offer, to stimulate creative writing. I cannot remember the exact date, possibly around 1998, only that it was from a London SW Women's Network day at High Cross Church in Camberley. The workshop was led by Stella Bristow. Up until then I had only written reports about events that happened, nothing purely imaginative, but it was the first of many. I likened that stone's journey over many thousands of years, the changes that had taken place and how it was as it lay in my hand, to our own life's journey. As we live we are smoothed out, with time wearing away our rough edges and leaving us content to take what comes.

My latest stone has two distinct "looks". About half is dull and rough, the other half is much lighter in colour and smooth. On one side the rough gradually becomes smooth. On the reverse the two aspects meet with jagged indentations, pits and discoloration. Life sometimes is rough, fighting to become smooth. Holding the stone in my hand, my thumb runs from the rough to the smooth barely discerning the uneven bits. My prayer is life can be like that too. Hold your stone and join with me in that same thought.

Jean Plant

Leatherhead Trinity School and Children's Centre

"You have searched me and known me... you are familiar with all my ways"

A few years ago, the periodic visit to a school by the Ofsted inspectors was regarded as a hostile act. The Inspectors were assumed to be looking for things to find fault with; the school would be in defensive mode, trying to project the best image possible and burying any problems.

These days, Ofsted would have us believe that the inspection has changed. The focus now is supposed to be on helping the school, not judging it, and the starting point is the school's own self-assessment.

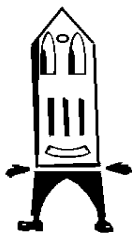
The theory is that problems and deficiencies don't matter too much in themselves as long as you can show that you have recognised them and are already doing something about them. Ofsted are now most likely to criticise a school for unrealistically rosy self-assessment, and the key judgement is the school's "capacity to improve" rather than where it is now.

At Leatherhead Trinity we had our three-yearly Ofsted inspection earlier this term. How did it match up to the laudable aspirations for inspections under this new regime? For, in many ways, we are a test case for this philosophy. Still emerging from the trauma and distraction of the merger of our three previous schools, only newly established in our new building, and serving an area with a wide social mix, it would be amazing if everything were perfect. It's not, and we are aware ourselves of where we need to improve, and we like to think we have in place all the measures needed to improve. But would Ofsted agree, or would they not see beyond superficial measures of attainment – SATs results, for instance, which inevitably improve only slowly in response to the sustained and real improvement in teaching we have obtained over the last couple of years?

The answer is a mixture of the two. The Inspection Team came, they saw, and they were impressed – impressed by the quality of the Head and the leadership team, impressed by the quality of teaching, impressed by the care and support for the children, impressed by how happy the children are and by the culture and atmosphere of the school. They gave us 13 separate "good" judgements, including teaching quality, leadership, engagement with parents, spiritual and moral development, and behaviour, and one judgement – for child protection – "outstanding". And these judgements really did stem from an impressively in-depth understanding of the school, there was nothing glib or superficial here, hence my choice of text to start this piece.

But, the Ofsted rules have certain inflexibilities built into them. Sadly, two key pieces of school data assumed, in our eyes, undue weight. "Attainment" refers to SATs results – not the progress the children make, which is what we care about, but their absolute level, which seems to us an unfair measure to emphasise when it depends on so many factors in a child's life. And "attendance" is something we recognise we have a problem with, and have been pressing hard on – but the improvement we have made so far isn't quite enough to pass Ofsted's preset threshold.

So in the Ofsted system, attainment and attendance artificially held us back, so that overall we are classed as "a satisfactory school with good features". But we have the reassurance of knowing that a searching and thorough inspection has in fact recognised so much that is good in our school. Yes, Ofsted has improved immeasurably – this Inspection actually did feel as if the inspectors were there to help us. But as a church school we know there are things more important than test scores and attendance percentages, and Ofsted hasn't quite grasped that yet.



Leatherhead

Activities at Leatherhead Methodist Church

Sunday Services: 10.30am and 6.30pm

Holy Communion is normally celebrated on the second Sunday in the month (morning) and the third Sunday in the month (evening).

Evening Services - the second Sunday is normally a service run by young people at the BFree Café, where all ages are welcome. The fourth Sunday is normally "New Fire" contemporary worship with the Uniting Churches held at the Methodist Church.

Crèche available for young children during the morning service.

Coffee is served after every morning service - all are very welcome to join us.

LMC Discoverers: Sundays at 10.30am **Contact:** Mary Pittam 01372 272658

House Fellowships

Monday Fellowship: Meet fortnightly **Contact:** Carol Stoves 01372 377125

Wednesday Fellowship: Meet monthly **Contact:** Winifred Ashbrook 01372 276776

Friday Afternoon Fellowship: Meet fortnightly **Contact:** Jane Smith 01372 372919

Tiddlywinks: Friday mornings term-time 10.00am - 11.30am **Contact:** Jane Smith 01372 372919

Splatter Box: Thursday mornings 10.00am - 11.30am **Contact:** Jane Smith 01372 372919

ROOM BOOKINGS Contact: Joy Foreman 01372 378869
ALL BOOKINGS MUST BE ENTERED INTO HER DIARY

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