

MONEY MATTERS (St Mary's finances)

If you were in St Mary's a few weeks ago, you may have heard that at the end of June our finances were not looking good – there was a deficit of nearly £17,000. Since then, the quarter to the end of September was better, and together with the special gift mentioned it looks like we will ALMOST meet our expenditure this year. But not quite. We still expect a small shortfall at the end of 2013. Small – that's not so bad - but we DO need additional gifts totaling £5,500 to balance the books. Church members have responded – a huge thank you to them - and we are on the way to meeting this need - but we are not there just yet.

What would REALLY help is if everyone could examine their giving and see if they could give just a little more regularly – by Standing Order, monthly or maybe quarterly, or weekly by envelopes. Then the extra giving would continue into the coming years, and help meet next year's increase in the budget, as well as deal with the immediate need of sorting out this year.

Why is the 2014 budget increasing? Well, the expenditure will be higher mainly because we will now be paying for most of both John, our youth worker, and Hannah, our children's worker, and also increasing the funding for our Associate Vicar, Tom Watts. The increase amounts to just under 8%.

If you are a relatively new member of our church you may not yet be giving regularly and I urge you to consider regular, planned giving through the envelope scheme or by standing order. There are forms at the back of the church.

If you can help, I hope that you will. If you can't – well, you simply can't, and you mustn't feel guilty. Your giving decision is between you and God, no one else. But please can everyone pray? Money is in God's hands, just as everything is, and we need to pray about it.

If you need help or further information please speak to me, Julie Dziegiel or the Church Wardens, Jacky Russell or Geoff Houston.

Michael Hardman

THE BIBLE
TV mini series
Saturday 30th November, 9.00pm
Channel 5



Tells the dramatic stories of faith and courage in the Bible.

St Mary's with St John's, Bellingdon

Family News

December 2013



Getting Ready

In their excellent book on Advent, Rick Mckinley, Chris Seay and Greg Holder make the following observation:

The time of year when worshipping Jesus should be the easiest is often the hardest.

I think I see what they're suggesting. That the truths that we celebrate at Christmas should naturally lead us to worship and wonder, that it should be easy to treasure & cherish what we learn in Scripture about 'Emmanuel, God with us,' that having a whole time of year put aside to helping us do that, having centuries of music, verse and reflection, that it really should be automatic that we find the celebration of Christmas a season that lifts our souls and deepens our faith. In theory ...

And I certainly see that it's hard (especially for those who of us who lead and speak and play and welcome at lots of Christmas services) to make Christmas a time of worship. There is above all the sense that something that is beautiful, precious, and essentially simple (the birth of Mary's son) has been kidnapped and bears the dirty finger prints of excess, greed and choking expectation.

Kidnapped by lots of things, really. Selling things, obviously, which seems to Christians like the incarnation of our Saviour is being trivialised. Nostalgia and sentimentality too, with all that cheery superficiality and harking back to a golden age that never was. The demands & expectations of office, family and sports club that seem 9 times out of 10 to end up with bloated stomachs, bleary eyes and a sore head, and leave us perplexed that we find ourselves celebrating the self-giving, sacrificial love of God by being greedy.

I would take issue with their observation in one way: the description of worship being harder or easier at certain times of year. In one important sense, worship is never 'easy' - after all it means that we are recognising and celebrating that God is sovereign (& therefore we are not). We are humbling ourselves, and taking ourselves out of the spotlight. The human heart and mind has a hundred ways to resist this.

So let's not wait for worship to feel easy before we decide to celebrate what Christmas really means. Let's instead be people who decide day by day, week by week, to be worshippers of God, be those who celebrate his Love, be those whose hearts and minds are continually captured by the wonderful horizons of the Gospel. Then we will find ample reason, at every season, to worship God fully. And then, maybe, we will see clearly enough to cut through the schmaltz and glitter and, can it really be true, **enjoy** Christmas?

Simon

Family Update....



More from Singapore

It's been a busy semester for us here in Singapore and we're feeling pretty tired and ready to visit you all soon, but it's also been a very fruitful time too.

Gwilym's talks in Acts for the Christian Fellowship's main meetings have been well received and a number of new people have been coming along. The student leaders seem to be growing through Gwilym's training in handling the Bible, but it has also been quite challenging for some. Five or so students have started reading Mark's gospel one to one with non Christian friends or family as a result of our witness project - one girl with her 79 year old Grandad!

One of the highlights of the sem was 'The Biggest Question', an evangelistic event put on by the CF for the school addressing the question of God's existence. There were more than 90 people there including a good number of non Christians, some of whom signed up for a SOUL follow on course. Planning is also well underway for our Mission week in January, which we're praying will reach lots of SMU students.

Jenny has been very encouraged through meeting some of the girls for Bible study and being involved in our church's new evangelistic playgroup. Judah has been benefiting greatly from being in various one to ones!

The week before we're back with you is our Singapore Students Bible Conference, where Vaughan Roberts will be the main speaker. Please pray for a good turnout, Vaughan and Gwilym's talks, and energy for all the staff at the end of a busy term.

Jenny & Gwilym Davies

We look forward to welcoming Jenny, Gwilym & Judah on Sunday 15th December when Gwilym will be preaching at our 10.30am service.

Pastoral Team Changes

There have been a few changes in the leadership of our Pastoral Teams. Sally Baily has taken over the co-ordination and support of team leaders from Beryl Stannard. Neil Lynch has taken over as Team Leader of the Home Visits team from Sue Haynes. We want to extend our sincere thanks to Sue Haynes for all that she has done over the past 5 years leading the Home Visits Pastoral Team and putting so much time and effort into this ministry personally. Our thanks also go to Beryl who provided guidance in a sensitive and supportive way to the team leaders.

Face to Face	Julie Mathew 792139
Home Visits	Neil Lynch 783901
Residential	Jean Corfield 778333
Transport	Dave Worrall 792214

St Mary's Christmas Services

Weds 18th Dec, 8.00pm	Town Carols
Sun 22nd Dec, 6.00pm	Carols by Candlelight
Christmas Eve, 4.00pm 11.30pm	Fancy Dress Nativity Midnight Service
Christmas Day, 10.30am	All Age Worship

Christmas Cards - available at the back of Church. These are printed with St Mary's Christmas services for you to give to friends and neighbours.

Prayer Cards - given out with this week's notice sheet. Please use these as a prompt to pray for those taking part in our services, and to pray about who we can invite.