

The Old Church News

O P E N T O A L L - O P E N T O G O D
V I C A R ' S V O I C E

I stand at the door of the year and I place my hand into the hand of God!

This isn't an exact translation of M Louise Haskins' poem "The Gate of the Year", but its sentiment is the same: a new year in the calendar and the unknown lies ahead and we, traveling on, need the assurance of things unseen but believed in.

On Advent Sunday, the beginning of the church's new year (back on 28th November) I preached on life as a circle of time: Just as we recall at a funeral service, from God our Creator we came and to God, our soul's destiny, we shall return. Thus, the question for us in life is not

where we are going (though undoubtedly we have plans and hopes) for we know that - in God's time, of course, we shall return to Him. No, rather, the question must be: How am I traveling?

Hope for every Christian is a future hope, and it isn't optimism: it's about making choices, deciding, upon the foundation of faith. We may make a resolution then (as any new year's eve closes and the new year begins) - although these might not be enduring! What should last, we pray, is the decision, and the choices made, in following Christ as disciples and travelling along in ways that lead to and pleases God.



P A S T M O N T H ' S N E W S

Snow, ice and freezing temperatures were the order of the day during the month of December. This led to many planned events being cancelled including the Discoverers trip to Barnett Hill Garden Centre and Carols around the Christmas tree in the Vicarage.

However a small number of the congregation braved the elements to sing carols in Asda, Cape Hill. The carollers were warmly welcomed by staff and customers alike with £133.72 raised and donated to the Help for Heroes charity. Having sung for an hour carollers were then treated to a much appreciated tippie in a local hostelry.

The service of Praise and Readings for Advent marked the start of our preparation for the celebration of Christmas. The varied services during this period gave the opportunity for individual and collective worship that centred on the coming of Jesus. Many were welcomed and rejoiced during the Nativity, Crib and Midnight Mass services with the bells calling all to worship.

New Year's Day saw bells pealing out again across the Diocese with a host of ringers travelling from Church to Church ringing for the New Year.

QI.... “Epiphany”

- On January 6th
- Originally celebrated the baptism of Jesus
- It became as important a festival as Easter (when Jesus rose from the dead) and Pentecost (when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples)
- But 300 years after Jesus’ death the date became associated with the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles, that is, who this baby is - the Son of God
- Manifested - seen and believed in
- When? - at the coming of the Magi to the stable in Bethlehem
- “The Magi” - the Bible does not say these are Kings, nor that there were three of them
- Magi were probably astrologers, or stargazers
- But they did bring three gifts: gold, myrrh and frankincense (we just do not know how much of each!)
- Epiphany then means that Jesus the child born in the manger was seen and believed in as the promised Saviour of the world.
- (the tradition of the twelve days of Christmas - and the taking down of decorations is nice and tidy, but the Christmas tree with its lights might as well stay up in our churches - if the pines do not drop off! - until Candlemass on February 2nd when we celebrate Jesus the boy being presented as “The LIGHT” to the temple of Jerusalem, and his childhood ending and his adult ministry beginning).

HEAVEN ON EARTH

Why not? At The Old Church we may just have tasted it in our Communion wine!

The wine we use is an organic dessert, or ‘pudding’, wine produced in South Africa from grapes produced by a Cooperative vineyard and then processed in a Fairtrade winery both located near the village of Trawal, Namaqualand, which is about 275 kilometres north of Cape Town on the road to Namibia.

The wine is produced from 100% Muscat d’Alexandrie grapes that after they have been harvested are dried for several weeks on a bed of straw and rooibos tea leaves which gives an added flavour as well as intensity to the sweet wine. The vines are irrigated which has given rise to a problem with snails and bugs that enjoy eating the grapes. Rather than controlling these pests with chemicals an organic solution has been found - Indian runner ducks are used to eat them. In turn, this has led to a sideline enterprise of selling duck eggs and meat.

The Stellar Organics Winery was established in 2002 by the four Rossouw brothers. It became a joint venture between them and a local farmer’s group and was awarded Fairtrade certification in 2004; the workers now own 26% of the winery and 50% of the Stellar vineyards. A Community Trust was established to look after the interests of the farm and winery workers. The Trust serves as a forum for workers to identify their needs and manages the income derived from Fairtrade sales as well as overseeing development projects within the community. Projects include fencing for workers’ houses, free housing and electricity for permanent farm workers and a trained health care committee. All schooling and child-care facilities are subsidised and the workforce is encouraged to take advantage of further education courses. In our small way, therefore, our adoption of Heaven on Earth wine is supporting the development of a community in South Africa. And for those that ‘enjoy’ an oenophile’s description: A superb dessert wine, light gold colour. The nose is very fragrant and hints at roses, apricots and pine trees on a hot windless day. The delicate flavours of the roses and apricots come through on the taste and are held together by wisps of rooibos, ending with pine nuts. [Wine Spectator, 2009] Personally, I just enjoy the wine!

DIARY DATES

January

6th	Feast of the Epiphany
19th	PCC meet in the Vicarage
23rd	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and a service at 5.30 pm held in the Salvation Army citadel in Pound Road, with a preacher from the United Reform Church, Mr Peter Christie. Please make a special effort to support these shared prayers and worship.