

Church of All Saints in the Vendée

“To know and to share Jesus Christ”

The Grapevine

December 2011

CONTACTS:

Priest: Position vacant at the moment

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PREFACE



My friends,

Once again, it falls to me to write the monthly letter in the hope that we will have real news about the appointment of a Chaplain to All Saints Vendée. In the meantime, let us take stock.



We leave November behind as we move into December and towards Christmas. In November, our thinking and praying was directed towards Remembrance – from All Saints via All Souls when we think of our own family members, to Remembrance and those events on that initial 11 o'clock on the 11th day of the 11th month, especially on the 11th year of the New Millennium. Writing these words today, in between Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday, a phrase from the heart of those services made me think “as we that are left grow old”, as did a line from one of the hymns for All Saints “we feebly struggle – they in glory shine”. Do we feel old and feeble? We have had a year of inter regnum and as we face a second year – art thou weary, art thou languid, art thou sore distressed?” We have had help, but it is you, the people of ASV who have seen us through a difficult year. November is normally rather a dismal month – this year it has been mild early, but with much sunshine and a few showers.. So with the November weather to encourage us and as we enter December – the month that in the Church’s year means Advent.

Advent is only a short season – just four Sundays, but like Lent preparing us for Easter, so Advent prepares us for Christmas and the promise of new life and new beginning – Advent is the start of the Church’s year. November looked backwards, December looks forward. This new direction starts at the tail end of the old year – the well known collect for the Sunday next before Advent, so called “Stir-up Sunday”. “Stir up we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people” – a call to action, to renewed action – “once more unto the breach dear friends.” We have before us the promise of new life and renewal, and each Sunday in Advent leads us to this goal. The Advent wreath with its four red candles and single white one, reminds us of the steps we must travel, the framework of the law, the wisdom of the prophets, the courage of John the Baptist, and the obedience and willing acceptance of Mary to carry the Christ child into the world and to care and protect him as his mother.

We may be old and weary, but this Advent season calls us again to prepare for the coming of the Christ child. We are the body of Christ. We have the task of showing Christ to the world – and so we pray:

And we, shall we be faithless?
Shall hearts fail, hands hang down?
Shall we evade the conflict?
And cast away our crown?

Thy memory will not fail us,
Nor leave Thy work undone;
With Thy right hand to help us,
The victory shall be won.

Yours
In His service

Herbie

P.S. In my part of the world “Stir up Sunday” was the day when the Christmas pudding was finally stirred by every member of the family, each one making a wish. The pudding was then cooked.

DECEMBER CHURCH SERVICES WITH BIBLE READINGS

04/12/11	Advent 2	11.00am	LCP	W + W	<i>Psalm 85</i>
	<i>1st Lesson: Isaiah 40: 1-11</i>		<i>Epistle: 2 Peter 3: 8-15a</i>		<i>Gospel: Mark 1: 1-8</i>
11/12/11	Advent 3	11.00am	PDS	Lessons & Carols	
18/12/11	Advent 4	11.00am	LCA	Lessons & Carols	
20/12/11		7.00pm	PDS	Carol Service (Anglo-French)	
24/12/11	Christmas Eve	11.00am	LCA	Holy Communion	
	Christmas Eve	4.00pm	PDS	Holy Communion	
	<i>1st Lesson Isaiah 9 2-7</i>		<i>Epistle: Titus 2 11-14</i>		<i>Gospel Luke 2 1-20</i>
01/01/12	NO SERVICE				
08/01/12	Epiphany 1	11.00am	PDS	Holy Communion	
	<i>1st Lesson: Isaiah 60: 1-9</i>		<i>Epistle: 1 John 5: 5-13</i>		<i>Gospel; Mark 1: 7-11</i>

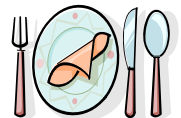
LCA-La Chapelle Achard; PDS= Puy de Serre; LCP La Chapelle Palluau

WW=Word & Worship; HC(CW)=Holy Communion (Common Worship); BCP=Book of Common Prayer

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Please join us for Tea, Coffee & Biscuits after our services, followed by a Bring & Share Lunch (Unfortunately, when there is a service on the fifth Sunday in the month, the hall is not available). Everyone is welcome to join us - even if you have not brought anything. There is always enough to go round!



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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

2nd December, Friday. This is an invitation to join in the Carol Singing at the Christmas Market taking place at the Topsy Bar, Coulonges-sur-L'Autise 79160 between 4 and 7pm. Tel. 0549 95 92 76

4th December, Sunday, Home Worship Group, 11am at Chris and Julie Taylor's in Saint Pierre-du-Chemin: 0251 507559, or email Christopher.taylor85@orange.fr

5th December, Monday, Prayer Group, 8pm at Chris and Julie Taylor's in Saint Pierre-du-Chemin

9th December, Friday, Final quiz of the year, 5.30pm to ensure 6pm start- same format as usual but food that you can eat and quiz at the same time to ensure that no-one is driving home too late.- round of questions relating to Christmas plus all the usual stuff - mulled wine on arrival instead of aperos. Please contact Polly Ward on 02 51 51 64 29

14th December, Wednesday, Christmas Lunch, 12noon for 12.30pm at `Chez JB`s`, Saint Pierre du Chemin. Booking form and further details from Mike Mylod on 02 51 51 07 36

15th December ,Thursday, Ladies Circle, 2.30pm at La Morandiere, Mouilleron-en-Pareds. For further details, please contact Joan Stewart on 0251 00 34 70

20th December, Tuesday, Carol Service, 7pm, at Puy de Serre, followed by mulled wine and mince pies (and any other appropriate seasonal fare) in the Salle. Offers of food would be very welcome - please contact Polly Ward on 02 51 51 64 29. Also, if you are interested in singing at this special service, again, please contact Polly.

CHRISTMAS CARDS

As many of you will know, Jenny Wilkinson is an agent for Phoenix Trading which supplies greetings cards, wrapping paper, etc. If you order any Christmas items from her at the moment, she has offered to give 10% to Church Funds. You can contact Jenny on 05 49 06 97 90 or wilkinson.jennifer@wanadoo.fr



Names on our Prayer List.....

Sally Mills – Although Sally is recovering from her recent hip operation, she is now suffering severe discomfort from the other hip.

Jo Collinson – is to commence radiotherapy on Wed. 23.11. 5 days a week for 5 weeks - please remember her especially during this time.

Rachel & Peter Hutchinson - problems of ill-health and they are struggling to maintain their large property.

Colin Phipps and **Katherine** – Colin continues to need regular treatment.

Colin Armstrong - who is convalescing at home in the UK.

Celia – who seems to be settling into her new environment.

Jean Mylod - who is in great pain and awaiting hip replacement surgery on 14th December.

Carol Stocking – who is recovering from knee surgery on 9th November.

Pat Kent – who is undergoing chemotherapy.

Vivienne Kwok – who is undergoing radiotherapy

Claire Ricketts, now staying in the UK (daughter of Neville Dilkes), who has recently been diagnosed with cancer. Please pray for courage and support.

Marian & Richard Rackham's sister, in the UK, who is very poorly.

Please also pray for Iranian **Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani** who is facing execution imminently for refusing to denounce his faith in Christ. I believe you may find further information on the internet regarding this.

Please let Dawn have details of any folk you become aware of who need our prayers.
☎ 0240 33 12 21 or ✉ dawn.collinson@wanadoo.fr.

“Thank you all for your continuing prayers”

Our Pastoral Care Co-ordinator is **Pat Kent**. Please let Pat have details of those who are ill, in hospital, or have other pastoral needs, as soon as possible. She will then forward information to the Prayer Co-ordinator.

Pat’s phone number is: ☎ 0549 72 27 72 and email: ✉ Geoffrey.Kent@wanadoo.fr



A BIG  **TO YOU ALL**

I would like to thank all of you in the Congregations of All Saints very much for your prayers and thoughts over the past few months, before my hip operation when there was a great deal of pain and discomfort, at the time of the hip replacement and during my convalescence. I have appreciated it greatly.

Physiotherapy sessions are continuing at present and I am due to see the Surgeon again at the end of November for X-rays of both hips and a consultation.

With my love and blessings.

Sally Mills


News from the ASV Council

Latest information regarding a new Priest-in-Charge for All Saints, Vendée.

You will recall from the November "Grapevine" that the closing date for applications on the latest appointment timetable was 17th November 2011. Late afternoon on the 17th Barbara Kenyon and I received an email from the Diocesan office to say that "sadly" no applications had been received yet again and this was very disappointing for everyone involved. We were informed that ASV was to be put on the agenda for the next UK Senior Staff Meeting on the 19th December and the Archdeacon is to write a short report for this meeting.

It was suggested that I contacted the Archdeacon and so I telephoned him on Friday morning. He assured me that there was nothing wrong with ASV or the material that we had prepared for this vacancy. There is a dramatic downturn in applications for posts in the Diocese of Europe in particular as well as the Church of England in general - in effect we are "one step removed" and there is almost a fear of the unknown in leaving familiar territory and economics plays a big part also. He assured me he would discuss the matter with the Bishop when they met the following week. In the meantime he was pleased that we had been able to maintain services with Locums, retired Clergy and Readers and he would assist in any way he could in finding our next Locum in 2012.

We must continue to pray that a suitable candidate will be found soon and elsewhere (Page 5) in "Grapevine" you will find a suggestion, approved by your Council, that we hold "[A Day of Prayer and Fasting](#)" to concentrate our prayers on this matter. Please support your Council during these difficult times.

Doug Green

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What is the best way to communicate ?



The subject of "Notices" in church services has generated a lot of comments this year. If the Notices are given out at the end they disrupt the service at the highest point, just after Holy Communion. So we tried giving out the "Notices" before the service starts but then the congregation start the service thinking about practical issues and not having prepared for the true purpose of why they were there - to Worship God.

The Ministry Team have thought about this and have asked the fundamental question - do we need the Notices? We hope not really, as all the information is contained in this excellent publication "The Grapevine". All event details are published every month and if dates, etc. are written in personal diaries, all that is needed, perhaps, is just a reminder nearer the date in some cases.

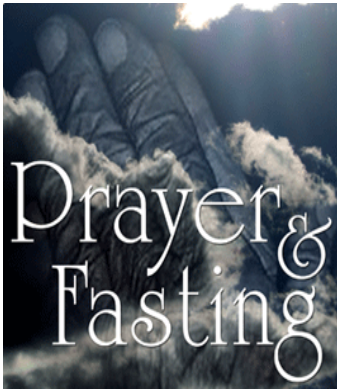
This could be done with a typed "Pew Sheet" each service and John Matthews produced an example for 13th November at Puy de Serre. This was just half a page of information, containing all the details needed and could be taken away after the service - excellent job John!

This has raised the need for a volunteer to produce these Notices in the future and to help with publicity for ASV in general. All expenses (paper, cartridges etc) will be reimbursed of course and this will be a very important but rewarding job. If you think you would like to do this, or need further information, please contact John or myself.

Please, we need your help.

Doug Green

ADAY OF PRAYER & FASTING. TUESDAY 6TH DECEMBER



As we all know, we are in need of a permanent Priest! At the moment, we do not have any applicants for this post. In similar situations in the Bible, both in the Old & New Testaments, men and women have felt led to have a time of prayer & fasting, (abstaining from food,) in order to seek God's will in such matters. Jesus also encouraged us to do this. So in order to seek God's direction in this matter, it is proposed to hold a Day of Prayer & Fasting.

There is no need to go anywhere special for this day, just spend your day in the normal way, substituting meal times with prayer times, praying for the Lord to send us His minister. Whenever we have a pang of hunger, it reminds us to pray. If you would like to take part, and there is no compulsion to do so, it is proposed that we take our normal evening meal on Monday evening, December 5th, and take no more food, (take liquids, however!) until the evening meal of Tuesday December 6th. This will make a 24 hour period without food.

WHY FAST?

We need to find out who God will separate out as a Minister to us! We all, I am sure, recognise the importance of this.

Fasting is linked to finding God's ministers and making sure they're in the right place!

Acts 13:1-3

Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Jesus says: "When you fast..." not, 'If you fast'!

We all go through times of distress, or times of special perplexity concerning God's direction. **These are times to fast.**

The **purpose of fasting** is to bring the body into subjection to the Spirit. Fasting is accompanied by prayers, for which the **power of the Spirit** is especially needed.

It has been said that, 'Prayer may be said to be that by which we attach ourselves to God, and fasting that by which we detach ourselves from the world.'

HOW?

Matthew 6v16 : "When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting"

We must not do this in pride, but in humility. Not tell everyone 'I'm fasting today....'
That only draws attention to ourselves, and therefore away from God.

HOW TO PRAY:

If you're unfamiliar with formulating your own prayers, you could perhaps start by thinking about our God. Who He is, by the person of Jesus Christ. His love, His forgiveness.

Think about your own attitude to God, to Prayer, to Christian fellowship. Give Him thanks.

Then ask God, through Jesus Christ, to show you where you go wrong, and ask Him to make you the person He wants you to be.

Think and pray about our situation at Church, regarding our need for a permanent Priest or minister, and ask God to send us the person whom He has chosen to lead us.

Whenever you feel a hunger pang, let it remind you of why you are fasting, and lead you back into prayer for God's will and direction.

Don't forget, we are not praying so that God will give *us* what *we* want, but so that we can receive what **God wants for us.**

So, let us humble ourselves before Him, deny ourselves, and follow Him.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chris Taylor

Étoile de Noël



I was quite shocked last week [early November] to see pots and pots of poinsettias in my local supermarket. Why was I shocked? Well, not because it was a sign that Christmas is on the way, but just because they were there so early! They looked so beautiful that, I must admit I was sorely tempted to buy one, but I knew, with the best will in the world, I would probably have killed it before I even managed to put up the decorations in the house!

Originating from Central America and Mexico, where it is known as `Noche Buena` meaning `Christmas Eve`, it became associated with Christmas as long ago as the sixteenth century.

Legend tells of a young girl, too poor to buy a gift to celebrate the birth of Christ. An angel came to her and told her to pick some wild flowers by the side of the road. She then took them to church to place on the altar. When she returned, they had turned into beautiful poinsettias. The shape of the `flower` is said to represent the Star of Bethlehem and the colour red, the sacrificial blood of Christ.

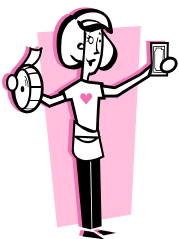
The Star of Bethlehem is one of the most powerful symbols in Christianity. Over the years, astrologers, historians and scholars have debated what this incredible light could have been. Yes, it is the time of year when a bright star shines in the west just after sunset, the planet Venus. However, this is not exceptional enough of itself. Research has shown that, at the time of Christ's birth, there were some incredible conjunctions of planets that was certainly unusual and would have looked like a large, very bright star. [Aren't computers wonderful?!] Or was it a sign from God, created miraculously to mark the birth of His Son?

*Star of wonder, star of light,
Star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to Thy perfect light.*

This is a very special season for all Christians. Enjoy the celebrations: the retelling of the Christmas story, singing the carols, eating your Christmas lunch, putting up your Christmas tree, spending time with friends and family – and all under the light of our Christmas Star!

Happy Christmas!
Joan Stewart

LAST CHANCE FOR THE CHRISTMAS DRAW



*Don't forget to get your Christmas Draw tickets!
Only 1 euro each!
Many great prizes –
and all of them handy for the Christmas season!
Turkey, chocolates, hamper, wine, etc., etc.....*



*Tickets available from Polly [Ward].
(02 51 51 64 29)*

Don't miss out!

*Prizes will be drawn at the **Ceilidh** to be held on **30th November** at **St Maurice le Girard!**
All those who still have draw tickets and/or money are asked to get it all to Polly as soon as possible, please
[including any unsold tickets]. Thank you!*



**Please send your contributions and letters for the January issue to:
"The Grapevine" Editor at: jpsmorandiere@free.fr before 15th December.**

Requests to be included on the emailing list should be addressed to Jacqui Stainton-James at:
sjfamily66@hotmail.com





Halifax Bomber crash site - Angles 11/11/11



As in previous years, an act of remembrance took place at Angles, Vendée where a Halifax Bomber crashed during a raid on a German Battleship on the 24th July 1941. Five of the crew were killed and two taken prisoner. They are now buried in the cemetery at Angles in an area maintained by the War Graves Commission. This year the weather was fine and dry and about 25 people took part in the ceremony initially at the crash site and then at the graveside. A memorial stone (stele) was erected by the French at the crash site and is still well maintained by the local mairie. A poppy cross was laid at each location as part of our act of remembrance of these young men who lost their lives in the service of their country.



Our thanks to all who took part and to Peter and Sally Mills who hosted refreshments at the end of the afternoon.

Doug Green



Puy de Serre - setting up the hall

After nearly all services at Puy de Serre we can enjoy a coffee and the bring-and-share lunch in the hall. **BUT** the hall has to be set up and the hot water urn put on before the service.

Four people meet at the hall about 45 mins before the service and put up the tables, place the chairs, prepare the tables for food and fill the urn; and then at the end of lunch the same people clear the hall again and clean up.

At the moment there are 5 couples on the rota and each couple does two Sundays consecutively so that the key, urn, spare plates and cleaning material can be passed on from one team to the next.

It is not an onerous job but it is a commitment and we really need about 4 more people to join this rota to share out the work load. So this is a request for some more people to come forward and volunteer.

We are about to prepare the rota for next year so please could you let us know as soon as possible if you think you can help out. The more people on the rota the easier it is for everyone.

Thanks!

Doug Green

Lift to church needed. Can anyone help?

We are members of the congregation of All Saints Vendee at Puy de Serre when we are in France. We have a friend Christine Weight who comes to church with us too.

This is our dilemma: Christine, whose address is 7 Rue du Buron, Fontenay le Comte, doesn't drive and would like to be able to go to church more often.

Is there anyone in the congregation that would be willing to give her a lift when we are not there? It would be wonderful if she was able to become a regular worshipper at All Saints and be able to be a part of the church family (she has no family in France at all.)

Many thanks!
Yours in Christ
Carol and John Judge

[Please contact Carol and John on carol.judge7@sky.com]

PUGHS' NEWS

In October Mair and John went to visit the Bishop to tell him that they were not planning to renew their contract with International Teams and the diocese of Morogoro for their own understandable reasons. The Bishop was pleased to get a lot of notice and to know that John and Mair didn't intend to leave before the current second-year students are through their end of year exams in January. In fact they now have a final date of the end of March by which time they sincerely hope other tutors will be engaged, including a principal for the school.

The new intake of students is getting on well as their knowledge of English is so much better than that of previous students. John is extremely busy with two groups of students without the support of Mair, presently in UK until 3rd December. She is concentrating on family visits this time. Her father is not well and there is Nel to cheer up in the north of England (talking to Mair on the phone seems to make her worse!) Grand-daughter Anwen has just spent a night in York hospital having swallowed a 2p piece! She needed an anaesthetic to remove it but all was well and she was back at school the next day.

The recent news about visas is that no way will the immigration office 'refund' the extra 6 months they didn't give in the first place but John's permit now includes Mair as a dependant, and cost \$600 rather than two separate ones of \$550!

John and Mair's good friends' daughter in UK, Bethany, who had the brain haemorrhage, is making good progress but slowly and will be moving home for a while and then go for intensive rehabilitation after Christmas. Alterations have to be made to the house to accommodate all the equipment necessary. It's all very stressful for the two little sisters of 9 and 7 years.

Back in Berega there was bad news for Ute who runs the orphanage. Her main help with the children, Ceci, was injured in a terrific road accident, much like the crash on the M5 in UK. She suffered a broken arm but was spared any burns. Fortunately Liz from the UK will be arriving soon to help out but Ute's plans for taking her adopted children to Germany will be delayed again.

Our prayers are asked for:

Ute and Ceci as they come to terms with the complication of the accident

Mair for a safe journey back to Tanzania and John as he travels around with the students on placement, and going to a conference in Dar Es Salaam

For Tanzanian tutors to be found, and especially for one who is suitable to be principal.

Bethany and her family that they can cope with everything that is happening in their life.

Praise God for:

Mair's good time with her parents

Continued improvements for Bethany

For Ceci's survival when so many people died in the crash.

Pat Martin