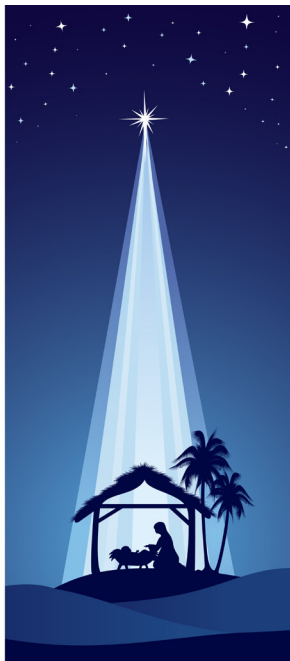
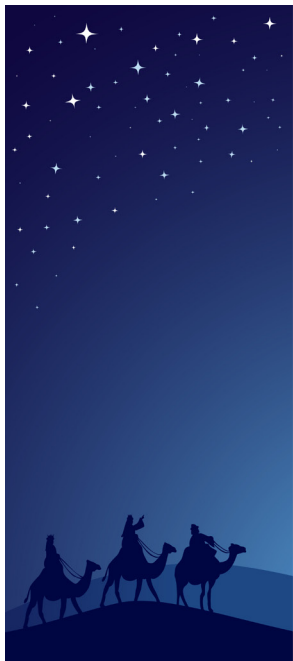


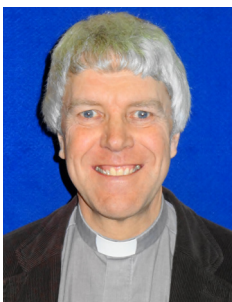
St James Church Magazine



December 2015 - February 2016 Edition

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Why does God allow it?

This question comes up at every Alpha course; Christians and non-Christians alike hear its nagging voice. One of the classic arguments against the existence of God goes something like this:

‘If God is all knowing, he sees the bad things going on. If God is all loving he cannot condone bad things. If God is all powerful he could stop them happening – but he doesn’t. Therefore he cannot have all of these qualities - which are fundamental to religious belief.’

Without wishing to ignore centuries of scholarly debate, may I offer a few personal thoughts which help me come to terms with tragic and evil events?

I don’t doubt any of the propositions in the argument above. God is all knowing, all loving and all powerful. But he is not a mere human being. We are totally hidebound by our human minds and emotions. Both of these are wonderful, God-given, and distinguish us from the rest of the animal kingdom; but compared with God’s view of the cosmos, ours is as tiny as an ant trying to figure out the theory of general relativity.

When I was about eight or nine I remember sitting by the fire in our back room and watching lots of tiny sparks from the logs flying out from the hottest part of the fire and darting towards the chimney. Usually they were extinguished before they reached the top of the fireplace. I remember thinking how short lived they were. Then my father broke in on my thoughts saying, ‘How do we know that our world is not like one of those sparks in the corner of some giant’s fireplace, where the whole of our time to the giant is as short as the life of one of those sparks? Or like a speck of dust in the corner of the giant’s book-case, here today and gone tomorrow?’

My father was no astrophysicist and nor am I, but he and I even then were fully aware that science was making great strides in understanding space and time. But we remain trapped in our space and time. However fancy our theories of multi-universes and space-time continua we are hidebound by our existence here, now.

Just suppose that God’s view goes something like this (the scriptures give us these insights):

- I decided to make this universe, the pinnacle of which (at least on earth) would be human beings into whom I placed a bit of my own spirit so that they could relate to me and work with me, and have the potential to live for ever so that their physical death is not the end for them
- I chose to make them independent beings not slaves or robots. I want them to choose to believe and follow me; to choose whether to spend eternity with me or without me

- I gave them the rules by which they need to live harmoniously; however I knew they would not be able to obey them – but they needed to know that they couldn't go it alone. In the meantime, bad things would happen because of the consequences of their choices. (Note that even the effects of most 'natural' disasters are known, and that people only live in inhospitable terrains because of the economic systems in place)
- I planned to enter their world when the time (their space-time, which I also created for them) was right, in order to rescue them and give them a lot more insight into my ways. They needed to be ready for this. This began in Bethlehem during their Roman era and culminated in my sacrificial death and resurrection
- Of course I am aware that all this 'time' bad things are happening, and I grieve for the individual human beings involved. (NB There is no such thing as 'the sum total of human suffering'; the maximum suffering is that which any one individual has to endure – and God knows about that.) There is no other way for the moment. My timescale is not theirs. But good things are also happening! Love, friendship, loyalty, sunrise and sunset, wonder, children, wisdom and senses to name but a random few... In fact life is generally regarded as so good that it has become a universal human desire to prolong and enhance it with all kinds of gifts and abilities which I have given them
- When those who trust me come to live full time with me, then they will see things from my perspective. Until then, they must take all this on trust. But if they keep in regular touch with me I can speak to them directly and through one another according to their differing abilities to listen and their differing life situations, so they do need to meet together to hear me speaking and feel my presence
- I have promised that I will never leave them or forsake them
- Those who trust me can work with me in the world I have created to bring others to trust me, as well as to do whatever they can to alleviate some of the bad things. I am right alongside them, slowly reversing the effects of all the bad stuff

Is that not all knowing, all loving and all powerful?

I also happen to believe it's true – for everyone. That's why evangelism, spreading this good news, is top of my agenda. The world so needs God's perspective and Christianity's unique insight into his mind and purposes.

May he set us free from being quite so space-time-bound this Christmastide.

Tim

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Jane and I have recently become grandparents for the first time and there is something very precious and wonderful about new life. This year there is a new baby in our family. And as Christmas approaches, we all find ourselves thinking about the image of baby Jesus lying in the manger. Our



mind's eye paints a picture of an infant asleep in a stable. We might imagine his crying or laughter as he reacts to those around him; a tiny little figure in a fragile world. From the moment of his birth, Jesus is responding to those around him, longing to hear their voice.

In Jesus, God comes to us as an infant: approachable, pure, and eager for us to come close to him. As a child Jesus reaches out, arms outstretched eager for a response. Thirty three years later those same arms would reach out on the cross, outstretched and open to the world in love and forgiveness.

As we enjoy Christmas with our friends and family let's be reminded of this image. Let's pray for God's blessing and peace for all those in troubled parts of the world and pray

they hear God's call and respond with love. Let us also pray for God's peace and blessing to fill our own lives and the lives of those around us.

Amidst all the noise and distraction of Christmas let's find a moment to be still and listen again to the call of Jesus. The Christmas message is as loud and clear today as any baby's cry: Jesus, the Saviour of the World, is here and he's yearning to hear our voice. May we respond by saying: 'O Come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel.'

With warm best wishes,

+Peter Bath and Wells



INTRODUCING

When Joan Cobb was asked to be interviewed for this article she was not at all convinced that anyone would find her story interesting. As we talked it became increasingly apparent that her life has been multi-faceted and shaped by many Godinstances which guided her and her husband John showing how God has been a faithful friend and guide.

Joan originates from Derbyshire, and grew up in Nottingham in a Christian family, attending both Methodist and Anglican churches. At the age of 5 she developed a bad stutter and her parents

arranged for her to have elocution lessons. Joan is convinced that this experience helped her develop an empathy for children and adults who struggle to communicate which was to have a significant influence on her career later - one of those God-instances of timing and circumstance. At 11 she went to Grammar School, leaving at 16, disenchanted by the prospect of studying Chaucer in the 6th form. She was drawn to teaching, and with no qualifications required, landed a job at a local private school in their kindergarten. While there she established two Brownies packs, using her experience as a Guider. She remained there for 11 years, by which time she was head of the lower school.

Joan was very involved in church during her teens and early twenties, teaching both in Sunday school and helping run a youth club, as well as the Brownies she had established in school. Giving service to God came naturally to her as part of her faith. Another of those God-instances occurred when she was 24 and went to attend a Youth leaders' course in Yorkshire. There, over tea and cakes she met the blue-eyed John, who was to become her husband. It took time however and another Godinstance, when 3 years later John, by then training as a YMCA leader, was sent as part of his training to Nottingham. Following their meeting again, John proposed and as Joan commented ... the rest is history. This involved big changes for Joan, as she settled into the role of wife and helpmate as well as a teaching job in Bristol when John was sent to the YMCA there. Subsequently in the freezing winter of 1962/3 they were moved to Norfolk, where John was in charge of a YMCA hostel and youth centre in Kings Lynn. Life was busy, living on the premises and running a hostel with much of John's work taking place in the evening organising youth activities for the local youngsters. However in different ways they were both drawn to teaching and John felt called to train as an RE teacher, and after two years in Norfolk they moved to Oxford for John to

attend the Methodist teacher training college. They were to remain there for the next 40 years. Joan is very conscious that God provided for them in terms of accommodation, jobs and family. There were more amazing Godinstances of timing and opportunity, which led to John's first appointment, and subsequently, as a couple struggling on a small income, to find suitable accommodation that fitted their needs at the time they needed it.

They had hoped for a family and in 1966, Amanda arrived, followed subsequently by Philip and Andrew. Although not teaching, initially life was extremely busy. But Joan still found time to do some voluntary work in a rehabilitation hospital, working as a speech therapist aide, which acted as a further influence to future developments.

Joan still had in her mind hopes to teach children with speech and language disabilities, and following the arrival of the children, John encouraged her to go for teacher training. It was at the end of two years at Westminster College another Godinstance occurred that led to a conversation with her tutor that resulted in her doing linguistics course in her final year at Reading University, which included Makaton, a newly developed language program, using signs and symbols to help people to communicate. She had a conviction that if she kept close to God, he would enable her to do what he planned for her. This indeed happened and her qualification enabled her to take up a new post to establish a language unit in Banbury in 1979. This proved to be a very fulfilling, exciting role, with the work being of a pioneering nature. She found herself at the forefront of language development for children with special needs and having a training role for teachers and heads in the county. In addition she was a busy mother and in 1980 her widowed mother also came to live with the family.

As today, teaching brought strains and stresses and this took its toll. Both John and Joan suffered periods of illness, but further opportunities arose and Joan continued her career first as a Special Needs Advisory Coordinator, and then finally teaching in the language unit attached to an inner-city Middle School. John had taken early retirement but had then trained in holistic massage and reflexology. In retirement Joan helped with dyslexic and disadvantaged children at a Homework Club on a local council estate an initiative set up by St. Andrew's Church. They received a great deal of support from their church, their faith being an important part of their lives

By the time they had reached this phase of their career, their children had moved away from home and were settled in Somerset, Wales and Argentina. Having

finally retired from very active and fulfilling careers, their thoughts turned to how they could see more of their children. On a visit to Somerset, they came to the conclusion that this was somewhere where they could live and with relatively little fuss they found a home in Curry Rivel, where they lived for 7 years. Joan's interest in children continued and she helped in the local primary school and at the Elms, a home for children with severe disabilities.

Visiting family in Argentina has also involved travelling to that very beautiful country, but as Joan says, that's another story (so do ask her!). Joan is grateful to God that all three of her children have a faith which finds expression in different ways and traditions.

About 6 years ago Joan and John decided it was time to move to a retirement flat, and a suitable one, close to the town and near the cricket ground became available. Sadly for Joan, John died only 6 months after moving. The last five years have been a period of adjustment to being on her own for the first time in her life. However she has a strong sense of God's hand and purpose in her life. And despite her bereavement feels a sense of contentment and peace about the future. She finds that she has opportunities for conversations with her contemporaries and a God-given confidence to speak about her faith and what it means to her.

Joan's involvement with St. James, followed a combination of circumstances. After John's death going to the church she had attended previously was unsettling. A further Godinstance of timing led to her coming to St. James, on a dark, wet and windy night, for an evening service with only a handful of people there. One was Tim, resplendent in cycle helmet and bicycle clips and another Ed Hosken, who amazingly is the son of old friends from Norfolk days. Friendships and a sense of belonging and purpose have followed.

Involvement at St. James has followed and Joan has found the opportunity to continue her lifelong wish to be useful for God. You will find her serving coffee on a Sunday, joining in with Messy Church and school services and most importantly giving time and using opportunities to talk with people in an encouraging way.

As she looks back Joan has been more and more conscious of how God has been there for her. She is grateful to be able to relax in his presence, assured of his love.

School Harvest Celebrations

It's not often the case of standing room only in church but when the children



and families of St. James school (pictured here) came to celebrate in October, this was certainly the case. It was lovely to welcome the children who celebrated the occasion with a wide selection of harvest songs, poems

and creative artwork. Parents arrived early to park prams, get a seat and enjoy a coffee before the children arrived.



A good array of Harvest produce was collected for The Open Door to provide food supplies for people who are Homeless.

The Autumn Term is a great one for celebrations and it won't be long before the children of both St. James

and North Town School return to the church to celebrate with their Christmas Services. It is always a great privilege to host these occasions and observe the excited exuberance of the children as they participate and show their parents what they have been learning.



Thank you to everyone who prepared and packed boxes this year and to those who donated to the transport costs and gave extra items. The



organisers were particular grateful for the box of toothpaste as this is one of the items they often run short of.



In total we were able to send 61 shoe boxes, which included 5 sent in by a friend of Liz Campbell's, who so enjoys making up gift boxes that she does this throughout the year.

Roger Fenton in his previous life, as the SW organiser for Samaritan's Purse UK, can testify to how warmly these boxes are received by the children and how generously they share the contents with family members.

Thank you St. James



Behind the Scenes

On most Sunday mornings while Church in the church is happening you might wonder why there are not many children around. There are of course the noises off from the crèche, which is usually a hive of activity, but where have the older children gone? The answer of course is the hall, where a dedicated team of Sunday club leaders are waiting to welcome children from three to teen in the halls. While the Urban Saints (10 plusses) occupy the small hall amidst the extra chairs and stacks of tables, the Pebbles and the Explorers groups meet in the main hall. All the groups are involved in a variety of activities, some noisier, stickier and messier than others, to help



learn more about the bible, God how a faith in Jesus can help in their day to day lives. Once a month, on a third Sunday, the gets messier when the Messy Church team is in operation to provide an all age session, to which mums, dads, grandparents carers and indeed anyone who enjoys hands on learning, are welcome.



them
and
them
mess

All this involves a lot of thought and preparation, and those leading the activities, will be plotting, planning and praying about their activities during the week. They arrive on Sunday morning bright and early to set up the things they are going to do, before welcoming the children as they drift in. Messy Church in particular needs lots of setting up and quite often the leaders arrive at the same time as the early bird sound team.



Numbers vary on any Sunday, sometimes there are only a few children, at others there can be twenty plus, so one of the challenges is to prepare material that is flexible enough to engage both small and large size groups of differing ages.

There are a number sub-teams, so that people involved don't end up doing a group week in, week out. Kate is very careful to ensure her teams have time for their own worship. In all there are at least nine people working in Sunday club and another nine people plus musicians for messy Church. That's Liz S and David, Mark and Michelle, Chloe (D1) and Alex, Deb and Andy, Chris and Alison, Martin and Jane, Jenny and Sheila, Joan, Liz E and Chloe (D2). Then there's Kate who makes sure all the resources are there, Richard T who sharpens the crayons, Richard, Bethan and Rob who provide music for Messy Church, the Wardens who make sure the rooms are unlocked and heaters are on ...and there are probably more!



Here are a photo selection of a few of leaders with apologies to them for sneaking them from the archives.



SPONSORED CYCLED RIDE

Sunday the 27th Sept,'15 was a glorious day, with a clear blue sky and warm sunshine. The ideal weather for the exercise planned after morning service. The House of St Martin and our own church decided on a sponsored bike ride, as well as a 5 miles walk to raise funds for the residents "move on scheme", and 50% of the amount raised going towards the cost of the new chairs in the hall.



I decided to cycle the 30 miles, something I had never previously attempted as my preferred mode of transport is my motor bike or car. It was later I realised I was to cycle the equivalent from Taunton to the outskirts of Exeter. There were 4 cyclists taking part from the House of St Martin's, and Stan and myself were representing our church. The 4 cyclists from St. Martins were well known to us at St James as they are valued members of our congregation. 3 members from the House of St Martin participated in the five miles walk.

I am using our magazine to record my personal thanks. Stan as usual was a tower of strength and I was grateful for his company, encouragement and support during the ride. I was completely overwhelmed by the support I received in sponsored donations. Church members, my work colleagues, family and friends were generous beyond belief, and I personally collected £300 in sponsorship. As many donations were gift aided my personal total well exceeded that amount, thanks to you all. I understand the

final total raised by the cyclists and walkers achieved £572.00 + gift aid plus the tax reclaimed through gift aid.

As a thank you the House of St Martin organised a barbeque in the evening which was an enjoyable success.

Thank you again for all those who so generously supported me. Although more tiring than my usual Sunday afternoons I am so glad I agreed to participate.

Adrian Inchly.



CHRISTMAS 2015

Sunday 29th November

10.30 am

ADVENT ALL AGE WORSHIP

.....

Friday 4th December

7 p.m. in the Hall

QUIZ 'n CHIPS

see separate publicity for details

.....

Sunday 6th December

10.30 am

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

ALL AGE WORSHIP

.....

Sunday 13th December

10.30 am

NATIVITY & FAMILY CAROL SERVICE

Followed by mince pies and coffee

.....

Tuesday 15th December

6.00 for 6.15 pm

BUSINESS CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 20th December

10.30 a.m

MESSY CHRISTMAS

6.30 pm

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

Followed by mince pies and coffee

.....

Thursday 24th December

4 pm

CRIB SERVICE

**For families and younger children
followed by refreshments**

.....

**MIDNIGHT
COMMUNION SERVICE**

Commencing 11.30 pm

.....

CHRISTMAS DAY

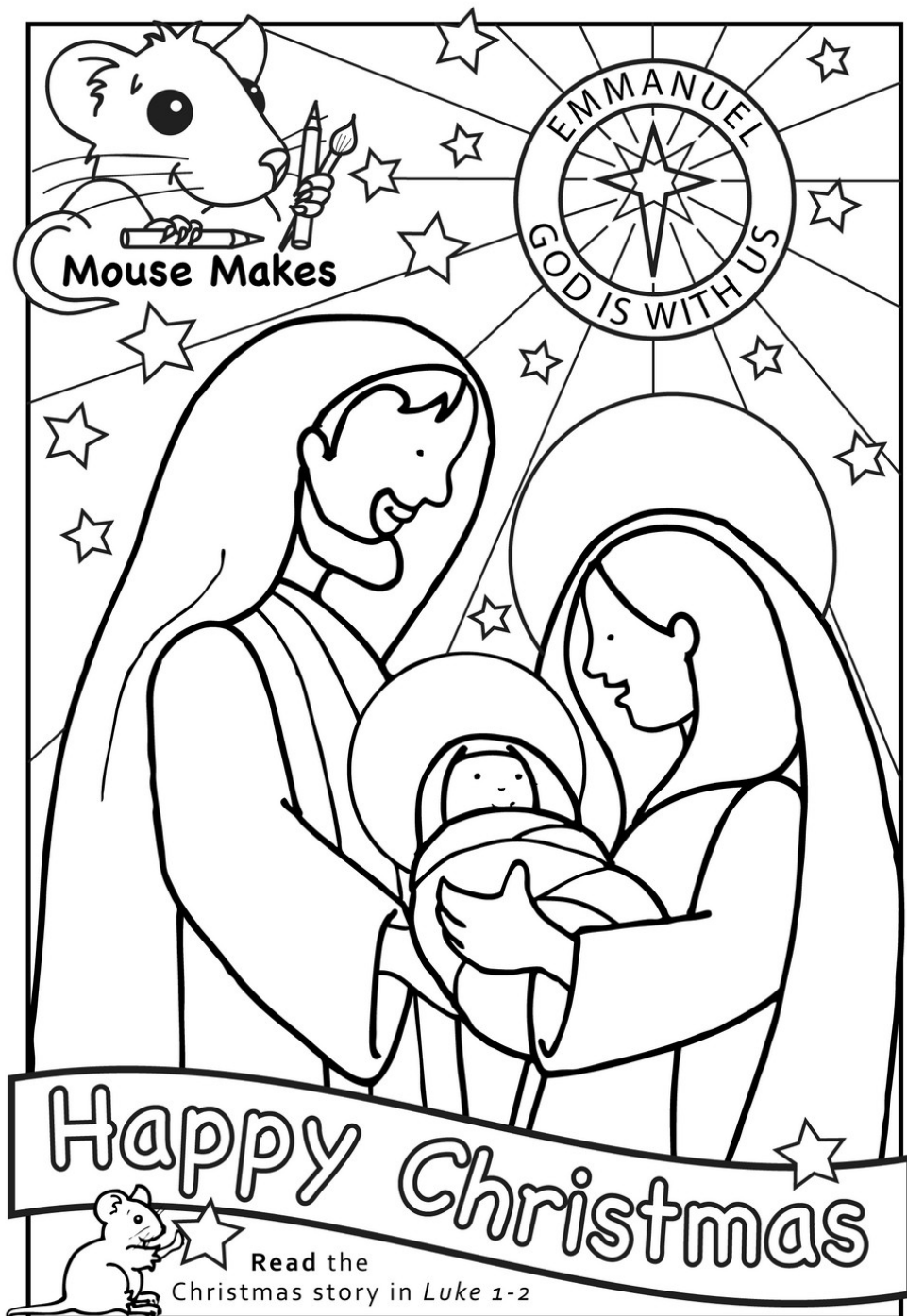
10.30 am

FAMILY COMMUNION

WORDSEARCH - SILENT NIGHT



SEE PAGE 21 FOR ANSWERS



They were amazed!

The Holy Spirit told Simeon to go into the temple. There he spotted the baby Jesus and **KNEW** God's special time to rescue the world had come! Now Simeon could die in peace! He told Mary and Joseph that Jesus was specially chosen by God to bring peace, light and glory but also destruction and sorrow.... They were amazed!

Why was Simeon so important? Read more in Luke 2: 22-35

Bible Sketchbook



Simeon - a good man



He went into the temple

KEPT
PROMISE!
GO IN
PEACE!
YOUR
SALVATION!
A LIGHT!
BRING
GLORY!
A SIGN!

*Part of what Simeon
said over Jesus*



He gave God glory for Jesus!



They were amazed!

W Mather®

Wordsearch for December 2015

Silent Night

This much-loved carol comes from Austria, where it was first sung as *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* on Christmas Eve, 1818. It was written by Father Joseph Mohr, a young priest at St Nicholas parish church, in the village of Oberndorf bei Salzburg. As Christmas 1818 approached, he asked the local schoolmaster, Franz Xaver Gruber, to compose a melody for his carol. Gruber was organist in the nearby village of Arnsdorf, and so was happy to oblige. On Christmas Eve they presented the carol to the church during the midnight mass. The carol went on to become loved world-wide; and the version sung by Bing Crosby is the third best-selling single of all time.

Silent	First	Christmas	Young	Melody
Night	Sung	Eve	Priest	Single
Loved	Stille	Father	Organist	Bing
Carol	Nacht	Joseph	Midnight	Version
Austria	Heilige	Mohr	Mass	Third

I've been reading...

... *The Liberal Delusion* by John Marsh (published by Arena Books). I thought I ought to understand better the challenges posed by liberal thinking to the church in our country. I had heard bits and pieces of various arguments, but then I saw a review (on the *Premier Christian Radio* website, I think) and duly made a trip to Brendon Books.

The book is a broad review of how liberal thought has permeated society, to the extent that to hold any other view is now not politically correct. We are seeing people vilified and even prosecuted for not having liberal views, which is a very illiberal thing to happen. An example is quoted of a pensioner who wrote "Free Speech for England" on a wall, being arrested for a "racially aggravated" act.

The book goes on to show that there is a bias against being white and/or working class and/or Christian. A further example was the extensive media coverage of the Stephen Lawrence murder (by a white gang) compared to almost no coverage for the similar murder of Ross Parker (by an Asian gang). Numerous other examples are given on how the media, especially the BBC, focus on bad things in British History, while ignoring inconvenient good things.

It's not all about Britain, however. The first case of genocide in the name of the cause of atheism occurred in France soon after the revolution, where 250,000 men, women and children were exterminated in the Vendée region after the revolution. And it is estimated that over 50 million people were exterminated in the Soviet Union, including the deliberate starvation of the Ukraine, which cost over 6½ million lives. These instances of atrocities carried out by the political left are often ignored as it is more politically correct to imply that Nazi Germany was the main offender. I could go on to review the book's findings in many other areas, but you'd get even more depressed.

The liberal trend began in the period we know as The Enlightenment, when there was a justifiable reaction to many European institutions which were repressive, rich and extremely conservative. Much good has come of this revolution in thinking, especially in greater equality and tolerance for people who are different because of race, sex, etc. But it has been taken too far, and the reasons for this lie in the assumptions made 300 years ago.

The French philosopher Rousseau claimed “Man is born happy and good, but society corrupts him and makes him unhappy.” This is in stark contrast to Christian teaching, which holds that all people are sinners, from birth. Unfortunately, the church has often taken this doctrine too far, and the Enlightenment was partly a reaction to that. The book helpfully clarifies that the word “sin” means to fall short, and doesn’t mean to be essentially bad. Everyday observation shows much good in people, but not all the time, and not as much in some people as others; so we all fall short to some extent.

The liberal view that everyone is born good means that only society is bad, and in turn that means that every aspect of society has to be attacked, from the family to institutions; our history has to be rewritten, and religion cast aside.

But ... Liberalism doesn’t explain where the bad in society comes from: this gets ignored. And it ignores mounting evidence for the effect of hereditary influences on how we each turn out. It’s not just a matter of ignoring this evidence however, as any scientist who steps out of line is excluded by a liberal elite.

So what does this mean for us? It is a warning that the church is not immune from these trends. There is an increasing antipathy towards religion of any kind, and Christianity in particular. We need to be aware of the fundamental assumptions made by the leaders of our society, and challenge them when we encounter them.

The book, however, stops short of saying how we are going to get out of this mess. Which leaves us open to extreme conservative views, which will undoubtedly take society too far the other way.

Instead, as a church we need to promote a positive view of our doctrine of “original sin”, as Jesus shows us through the record of the gospels. He saw the good in the ordinary people he met, from beggars to centurions and tax collectors – there is no instance of him condemning them out of hand for being sinners. The history of the early church showed how a wide range of people came together as leaders. So we need to hold on to the gains that have come from the liberal revision of the pre-Enlightenment views, in line with Jesus’s acceptance of everyone. But we now need to reclaim the meaning of sin as “falling short”, and rather than turn the clock back by stressing the link with condemnation, we need to show that it is the starting point for a truly free – and liberal – life.

MW

Turkey Soup

Ingredients

2 sticks of celery finely chopped
2 large carrots diced small
4 chestnut mushrooms sliced thinly
250g cooked turkey or chicken leftovers
(if you are lucky enough to have them!)
1 litre chicken stock
1 teaspoon mild curry powder
Knob of butter
Seasoning to taste
Serves 2 - 3



Melt the butter and fry the celery and carrots until softened. Add the mushrooms, turkey and curry powder and stir for a few minutes before adding the stock. At this stage left over stuffing and cranberry sauce can be added for extra flavour and richness. Bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer for 20 - 30 minutes. Adjust seasoning and liquidise to required thickness. Delicious served with thick chunks of crusty bread and butter.

A firm favourite with the family except for one memorable year!

I'd bought the turkey the day before Christmas, a nice fresh one, so I thought, from the supermarket. A bit dicey leaving it so late but my friends never had problems buying last minute.

The next day as I plonked the turkey on the work top, I noticed a definite pong . Alarm bells began to ring that all might not be so perfect with this turkey. Cutting the bag open I could see that one of the legs was a greenish, yellowish hue. Help! This was Christmas morning and I had my father-in-law, mother, brother plus our family of four expecting to sit down to a turkey dinner.

Father-in-law had offered to pay for the turkey and had high expectations of having an excellent dinner with all the trimmings.

I couldn't risk giving them food poisoning so muttering wildly I grabbed the turkey, opened the back door and with one fell swoop threw it in the dustbin, watched by my bemused younger daughter.

As the turkey plummeted down so did my spirits. What on earth was I going to do? I had a small Quorn joint in the freezer that was the only thing mildly resembling turkey. There was no time to think further as the family were assembling at the front door, coated and booted, ready for the walk to church. We linked up with the neighbours, exchanging pleasantries, me with a fixed smile. With adults and children strung out along the road, I heard our younger daughter shout above the chatter. 'Guess what, Mum's chucked the turkey in the dustbin.' Faces turned questioningly. No time to stammer more than, 'It's off,' before we were being greeted warmly by the vicar.

I sat squashed in the pew in a state of disbelief, passing the hour cocooned in a reverie of carols. Forget the water into wine, I needed a straight quorn to turkey miracle. On the way home I thought of the congregation going back to homes full of cooking turkey smells. We opened the door and just the whiff of chocolate hung in the air. I pulled the Quorn out of the freezer and set to work. My husband and daughters had been sworn to secrecy.

When they arrived, father-in-law in his usual ebullient manner offered to carve and mother wanted to know if she could help. 'Give them extra large sherries, I hissed to my husband, and don't let them anywhere near the kitchen.

At one o'clock precisely, a tap on the back door revealed a guardian angel in the form of my dear next door neighbour, holding a covered plateful of turkey slices. 'Hope this will help,' she winked. Help, it certainly did. There was enough turkey for the men. My mother and the rest of us would have Quorn. Let's face it mum's taste buds were shot and her sight was failing. As we settled down to eat my mother was heard to chirrup.

'Best turkey I've had in years!'

Bridget Hall

The PCC has been discussing...

Here's a summary of the main things the Parochial Church Council looked at in its September, October and November meetings.

Overall, the PCC continues to focus on strategic matters, and spends less time discussing detailed topics. Nevertheless, the agendas have contained a rich variety of subject matter...

Vision / Five Year Plan

The PCC and the coordinators had an Away Day at the end of October, where they looked at various factors to be considered when discerning God's vision for our church over the next five years. They also spent time in quiet, reflecting and listening.

Among many matters mentioned at the Away Day or in PCC meetings are: running another Growing Leaders course; setting up another main service (not necessarily on Sunday morning); planting another congregation (not necessarily in our own building); how much do we really care about outreach?; internal communications and external publicity; welcoming and integrating newcomers; enriching the church's prayer life; discipling (courses etc).

The SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis that is currently being conducted by the home groups will be a useful input in identifying areas that need attention.

The current aim is to make a presentation on progress at the Annual Meeting in April, but not to set an arbitrary deadline for completing the discernment process.

Coordinators

Geoff Treasure and Kate Taylor have announced that they will not be seeking extensions of their terms as coordinators. The PCC has begun to look at the process of appointing a new Teaching Coordinator in April and a new C&YP Coordinator in July.

Coal Orchard redevelopment

Church officers are discussing with Taunton Deane Borough Council the impact on church of the proposed redevelopment of the Coal Orchard area. The main issue is the closure of the car park. Other issues include a proposed block of flats on the site of the Bike Park, and missing the opportunity to open up views of the church tower.

Finance

Due to the replacement of the boilers, there will be an operating deficit over the year of around £20,000. It is hoped that a good proportion of this will be recouped in future through lower gas bills, due to more efficient boilers and a new gas supply contract.

We have been informed that the Parish Share for 2016 will be £67,279 – an increase of 9.5% over this year. The increase is primarily due to a 7.7% increase in our attendance and a 1% increase in the diocesan Common Fund (which pays for clergy etc).

Progress reports

St James Debt Advice: progress on getting approval from the Financial Conduct Authority is slow. Nine new volunteers from King's Church Quantocks (Bishop's Lydeard) are in training.

Video Screens: screens are now in place using temporary wooden brackets for a trial. The next step is to get permanent metal brackets made, and to decide the height and size of the screens. In due course we plan to have two screens in each aisle, and also cameras to relay to them what is happening "up front".

Church heating: the new boilers are now installed, and the improvement in efficiency is noticeable. Some extra work was needed to replace the ancient outside header tank, and replace a badly corroded section of pipe in the south aisle.

Tower Stonework: the cost of doing the first stage work to deal with loose stone on the tower is being negotiated by our architect.

Routine but important stuff

The PCC has an annual schedule of matters that need to be kept under review. Recently we have looked at:

- The Health and Safety Policy (copy posted outside the office)
- Compliance with relevant legislation
- Fees, charges and wages
- Insurance
- Diocesan policy for the prevention of bullying and harassment.
- Capital Expenditure Plan: outstanding projects are video screens; outer vestry storage and replace floor; and additional staging. Finance is insufficient at present for all of these.

The latest full PCC minutes are displayed near the coffee area. MW

Coordinators' Report

Our coordinators look after many aspects of church life. They meet together, with Tim and the wardens, from time to time to let each other know what's happening and to discuss common matters. This is a summary of their report to the PCC from their October meeting.

Teaching (Geoff Treasure)

- Geoff is planning to stand down as Teaching Coordinator at Easter. The role may well change in style in future.
- Tim suggested that during Lent 2016, the focus could take the form of larger church meetings instead of Homegroups, where we listen to God and wait on Him as we seek his vision for us as a church over 2016 and the coming five years.

Outreach (Jenny Wakefield and Roger Fenton)

- We are looking at running two Alpha Courses a year (spring and autumn) so there is always the opportunity to invite new people along. A daytime Alpha could be run for young mums or older people who are not so keen on going out in the evening.
- Two social, non-religious events will be put on each year. Bring your friends to these as a first taster of the church.
- Polly Rhodes has offered to coordinate our catering team.
- Another Growing Leaders Course may be run, possibly starting in the summer of 2016 and run throughout 2017.
- We need to avoid having too many events calling on peoples' resources and skills. An annual plan is needed, especially where catering is involved.
- The importance of internal communications and external publicity was raised. (There is insufficient space here to describe the many suggestions which were made.)

Children & Young People (Kate Taylor)

- Kate will be stepping down as C&YP coordinator in the summer.
- 50 families are registered at Toddlers. There are currently two vacancies for helpers on Mondays.
- The Wednesday Praise and Play has also grown and Kate really needs more help with this each week.
- Numbers attending the All Age Worship service have also increased. More support is needed in the crèche on the 1st Sunday of each month.

Worship (Richard Lucas)

- The balance of morning and evening services from one Sunday to the next is being reviewed. Fewer people seem to be coming every week, so the balance is becoming more important.
- We are now regularly able to have five singers to lead us in worship. It is hoped that people will be able to sing regularly with the same group. There are also one or two new musicians, which is also encouraging.
- Some of the singers are now arriving earlier to help set up the equipment, which takes the pressure off the technical team.

Pastoral (Annie Reid)

- The email prayer chain is working well and being used. It was suggested that maybe Homegroups could pray for specific groups within the church as has happened in the past.
- There is an ongoing problem with transporting members of the congregation to church. This is an area where more volunteers are desperately needed. As many people are involved in other roles on Sundays, we hope that others who are not tied up could step forward for this.
- Annie is looking into a marriage preparation course called 'Focus'.
- We are aware of weaknesses in how we identify newcomers and how we then link them into smaller groups so they can get to know people. We need more newcomers' events, but we also need to look at who takes the lead for this on a Sunday. As a start, badges are needed for the welcome team, so new people know who to ask if they have any queries.

Administration (Karen Gamblen)

- Karen and Tim are updating the members' database, but the computer program could do with updating first because the various church groups have changed in number and name over the years.
- Communication between the coordinators continues to work well, but dates required for bookings need to be given well in advance if possible, as the church buildings are very busy.

Please continue to pray for the coordinators, as they have very responsible roles which will become even more important as the church grows.

NEWSLETTER CONTACTS LIST

Contacts for Pastoral Matters

Vicar: Rev. Tim Jones 01823 333194 e-mail: timjones@tesco.net

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Magazine Editor - Andrew Slade 01823 259440 e-mail: 3waypersonalprint@gmail.com

Churchwardens - Stan Wojcik 01823 443287 / Ruth Stevens 01823 972838

HOME GROUPS

Tuesday

10:30 am 34 Dunkleys Way (Contact Jean Jarrett 288144)

Wednesday

2:30 pm 15 Barrington Close Fortnightly (Contact Ken Jamieson 289367)

7:30 pm 13 Gyffarde Street

(Contact Mark Stevens 972838; hosts Bethan and Tim Baigent 271655)

7:30 pm 28 Comeytrowe Lane

(Contact Steve Bradford 337690; hosts Wakefields 277318)

7:30 pm Killams Group (Contact Les Andrews 254344)

7:45 pm 42 Ashley Road (Contact Richard Sainsbury 284688)

8:00 pm Hesperia The Avenue (Contact Richard Carpenter 277916)

8:00 pm North Taunton (Contact Mark Johnson 07796525094) - Fortnightly

Thursday

2:30 pm 25 Whitmore Road (Contact Kathryn Clarke 283691)

2:30 pm 27 Priorswood Road (Contact Kay Seed 251077; host Sue Collard 271858)

7:30 pm 69 Richmond Road Womens' Group (Contact Margaret Jones 333194)

7:30 pm 21 Ryesland Way (Contact Geoff Treasure 490458)

8:00 pm 12 The Avenue (Contact Sue Doyle 271223; host Annie Reid 07812 130619)

OTHER GROUPS

- Mondays Parent and Toddlers Group 10am-11.30am in the Church Hall
Contact Kate Taylor (619739)
- Tuesdays Bell ringing (alternate weeks) Contact Marian Gentile (275278)
- Wednesdays Art Group in the Church Hall Contact Church Office (272931)
- Praise and Play in the Church 10am - 11am - for pre-school children
 and their parents/ carers every Wednesday.
 Contact Kate Taylor (619739)
- Thursdays Thursday Fellowship (first Thursday of the month)
 in the Church Hall Contact Vicky Dykes (282507)

BLESSINGS FOR 2016



THEREFORE,
IF ANYONE IS IN

CHRIST

THE OLD
HAS GONE

THE NEW
IS HERE!



2 Corinthians 5:17

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

The Next Newsletter is due out on 6th March. All entries for this Newsletter must be submitted by 31st January. All entries are at the discretion of the Editorial team and the space available.