



Dates for your Diary:

January

Men's Breakfast

Saturday 6th January 8.45am

Lunch Club

Monday 8th January 1.00pm

Book Group

Wednesday 10th January at 7.45pm.

We are reading 'The Cat Who Could Read Backwards' by Lilian Jackson Braun. Unfortunately we are unable to get this from the library. For those who have access to the internet it can be purchased quite cheaply on Ebay or Amazon. All readers are very welcome

Readers may be interested to know that The Miniaturist which we all enjoyed earlier this year is being shown on BBC 1 on 26th and 27th December at 9pm

Christingle

Sunday 14th January 10.00am

This service is in aid of The Children's Society. There are collection boxes at the back of church for the Society if you would like to take one to put loose change in ready to bring to the service.

St Francis Fellowship

Monday 15th January 2.30pm

Stamps

There is a collecting box at the back of the church for used stamps. Dawn M is collecting them for the Leprosy Mission

Contact details:

Rector – Revd Stefanie Hodges – Tel 504228 (Unavailable at present)

Curate – Revd Diane Peters – Tel 532796

Newsletter – Sallie Garrod – Tel 504839 or email sallie.garrod@gmail.com or admin@stfrancisstclareguildford.org.uk by Wednesday 9am please

Hall manager/lettings – Val Holt – Tel 852764

Vulnerable Adults – Eike Ndiweni – email Eike.ndiweni@gmail.com

Stewardship – Mike Hammond - Tel 562661 email m_hammond@talk21.com

ST. FRANCIS PARISH CHURCH, WESTBOROUGH

Notice sheet for Sunday 24th December 2017

A very warm welcome to everyone joining us for our Christmas Eve Services. Please do join us in the hall after the service for a cup coffee and a chat.

Wishing everyone a very happy and blessed Christmas



Collect for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

Eternal God,

As Mary waited for the birth of your Son,

So we wait for his coming in glory;

Bring us through the birth-pangs of this present age

To see, with her, our great salvation

In Jesus Christ our Lord

Readings

2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16

Romans 16: 25-end

Luke 1: 26-38

Please pray:

- For Stefanie's ongoing recovery
- For Doris, Dawn M, Mary, Pam, Maureen, the Ndiweni family and all who are unwell at this time. If you would like to, please put the names of those you pray for on the prayer tree, they will also be prayed for during Morning Prayer in church

- For all who have responsibility for caring for others and particularly for families finding this time of year difficult

Who said these words?

“I feel happy – I can’t remember feeling this happy – ever...” Was it

- A child who has woken up on Christmas morning and received the one present that he had been waiting for all year
- Someone getting good news that their potential life threatening condition has been eradicated and has been given the all clear?

“His love is so wonderful...” was it

- A young bride to be describing her relationship with her fiancée
- An elderly lady living alone speaking about her dog who has been her companion for years?

“I get so excited and amazed by it all...” Was it

- A father watching the birth of his third child!
- England’s women’s cricket team winning Team Sports Personality of the year award this year!?

I’m sure ALL these answers may be correct at some time, but not on this occasion. These remarks were spoken to me just last week, remarks made by a person who, like thousands of other people has attended church on and off for years. So what is so different this time? The difference is she has experienced something very new. She has experienced the love of God in her life for the FIRST time.

She has met Jesus in a way she never had before, ‘Face to face’ one may call it. A knowledge turning into a relationship. How wonderful and how appropriate at a time such as this. As we approach the Christmas season, here is one person who has truly found **‘The reason and the meaning of the season’**

Jesus. An expression of God’s love for us in one tiny baby. God himself in human form. ***He is the reason and the meaning for the season***

For some, it is cards, presents, carol singing and Christmas trees. It is meeting with and knowing the love of family and friends, consuming the endless festive

feasts (even turkey for the fifth time in a row!), all part of the enjoyment of the season. But for many others, it is a different story. It can be a painful time, painful memories and regrets, the feeling of loneliness. While some are overwhelmed by stress and others heading towards debt, spending beyond their means for the sake of impressing, or sadly believing it will show our loved ones just how much we care for them. This... for many is the meaning of the season.

For me it is not the sentiment, nor the presents, nor even the joy although all of these are part of the fun of Christmas, (it’s certainly *not* the turkey five days in a row!), but it is the **fact**, that we celebrate the coming of the Lord God into the world as a mere human being.

Because of this we can trust Him because He knows what it is like to be one of us - the joys and the difficulties - and promises that, if we let Him, He will be alongside us and even transform our lives so that our lives have meaning.

The reason and the meaning for the season is to remember that Jesus is a gift to each of us, as a baby in a manger and now as Lord and Saviour with a love that this lady has experienced and a love that is there for all people and for all time So no matter what the season we too can say:

“I feel happy – I can’t remember feeling this happy – ever”

“His love is so wonderful”

“I get so excited and amazed by it all”

So let us be encouraged to include Him more definitely in our celebrations, to know and experience His love and not put Him away when the season is over.

May I wish you a truly blessed Christmas and peace and joy in the coming year.

Stefanie

