



**St Michael and All Angels
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Sustaining the Sacred Centre

How do you relate to the following words? “Sustaining the sacred centre is about encouraging and enabling clergy and lay people to deepen their enjoyment of God and to recognise God’s presence in everyday life.” “Sustaining the sacred centre” is the first of the five key priorities of “Living Faith for the Future” – a vision for all the churches in this Diocese.

I am attracted by this particular priority and am glad that it is in number one position. The other priorities are: making disciples; making a difference in the world; creating vibrant Christian communities; shaping confident, collaborative leadership. If we recognise that there is a sacred centre, God’s presence, at the heart of all things then everything else, including the other four priorities, flows out of it. Sustaining the sacred centre is like the cross on a hot cross bun (apologies for not being seasonal!).



The words that leap off the page for me in the description of sustaining the sacred centre are: “enjoyment of God”. They’re surprising and appealing but also challenging. We may recognise within ourselves a yearning to enjoy God. However, when we are facing life-changing circumstances or simply the stresses of daily living we may not feel as if we are enjoying God at all. We may feel numb or angry, shut God out from our preoccupations or doubt whether there is a God at all.

Sometimes church services and meetings begin with a prayer about laying aside the concerns of the day and entering into God’s presence. Do we really need to park our preoccupations before we communicate with God? Surely the worries, joys and sorrows of the day can be incorporated into worship. Can we talk to God about them – even if it’s in private or in silence? Sustaining our sacred centre is about getting real with God so that we bring our everyday life to God and grow in our recognition of God’s presence in it. It’s about making time for ourselves to be with God and to be sustained by God. That, for me, is the message of Christmas. In Jesus, God makes real for us the sacred at the heart of the world. The challenge for us is to recognise it.

Our Vision Statement

As a Christian community, we seek to engage with the world around us and to be a place of welcome and acceptance for all on a journey to God – believers, doubters and those who are seeking.

Saving Our Shared Home

Pat Rees writes about the urgent need to cope with the challenge of climate change

The Wave offers the chance of demonstrating to ourselves and to those in government our sincerity. We believe that Planet Earth is a shared home and therefore feel responsibility towards those who have already suffered from dramatic changes to their environment. As for those of us who have so far been less affected, our precious environment is changing rapidly. We must mobilise our resources of wealth and expertise and invest in a shared solution. The ecumenical service at Central Hall, Westminster (see box right) is a chance for us to engage further with this issue as Christians.

We can be helped towards an understanding of climate change, both the complexities involved and the urgent need to meet it by either of the following organisations who have been working with this issue over many years and publish information we might not otherwise see.

- World Development Movement, 66 Offley Road, London SW9 0LS
Tel: 020 7820 4900. www.wdm.org.uk
- Christian Aid, 35 Lower Marsh, Waterloo, London SE1 7RL
Tel: 020 7620 4444. www.christianaid.org.uk

On the Peace and Justice Board in church is a letter from our MP, Cheryl Gillan, expressing her concern and the urgent need for a commitment by the governments represented at Copenhagen.

Christmas Worship at St Michael's

cafécarols@stmichaels

Churches on the Hill, Amersham invite you to sing carols over mulled wine and mince pies (and support Shelter).

Saturday December 19. 4.30 pm

Carol Service

A service of nine lessons and carols.

Sunday December 20. 6 pm

Candlelit Compline

A short service of night prayer on each of these evenings in Advent.

Sunday Dec 13 – Wednesday Dec 23. At 7.30 pm



Crib Service

All ages are invited to gather round the Crib with readings and carols.

Christmas Eve. 4 pm

Midnight Mass

Holy Communion, carols, candles and incense.

Christmas Eve. 11.15 pm

Christmas Day

**8 am
Said Communion.**

**10 am
Christmas Communion, with carols.**



Be Part of THE WAVE

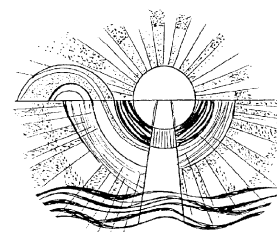
Christian Aid and other aid agencies invite us to join in a day of action on Saturday December 5 to show we care about climate change. The day will start with an ecumenical service at 11 am at Central Hall, Westminster, at which the Archbishop of Canterbury will speak. Then at 12 noon the marchers will assemble in Grosvenor Square and at 3 pm they will surround Parliament. **Marchers are asked to wear BLUE so that the walk looks like water flooding the streets of London.**

Paul Brannen of Christian Aid says: "On the eve of the crucial talks in Copenhagen the Wave is our chance to take the message of climate justice to the Prime Minister. Copenhagen is our best chance yet to secure a deal that takes action on climate change while allowing poor countries to develop."

If you are able to come and show support please let Hew Motion (766243) know.

Saturday December 5

LIVING WATER



A quiet time of stillness, Gospel reading and simple sharing of bread and wine. Sustaining the sacred centre.

**Sunday 3 January. 6 pm
Lady Chapel**



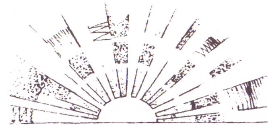
Our Persecuted Church Family in ERITREA

A small country on the Red Sea coast of N.E. Africa, Eritrea is ruled by an autocratic President and military regime, with Islam as the dominant religion. More than 3,000 Christians have been detained without trial in the past 7 years. Many are held in shipping containers – scorching by day and freezing by night. Dozens of Christian churches and ministries have been closed down, and many believers tortured in attempts to force them to change their religion. Some women prisoners are beaten repeatedly on the soles of their feet for a month; some prisoners have had teeth removed with a screwdriver and hammer.

One woman, Helen Berhane, was imprisoned because of her ministry as a gospel singer.

Through international pressure and her high profile status she was released and smuggled out of the country. She and her daughter are now safe in a European country, but her health remains poor from the torture she was subjected to.

Even in ‘safe’ countries, though, some Eritrean refugees have been hounded by Eritrean secret police, harassed and even killed. Others in refugee camps in neighbouring countries are still vulnerable to abuse and forcible repatriation. Up to 500 Eritreans a week risk the dangers of minefields, crocodile inhabited rivers and border guards with orders to shoot to kill, in an attempt to be able to simply live in peace – many just because of their faith in Jesus Christ.



SATURDAY S L O T

The short, informal service for all ages, with children's activities and refreshments, will now be at 3 pm on the first Saturday of every month, starting in February. The next Saturday Slot will be on

Saturday February 6. 3 pm

First container leaves Workaid's new premises

The first container left Workaid's new premises in Chesham in August and is expected to reach Kenya in time for Christmas. The contents will be distributed to 20 training and self-help projects in the country and will be helping another 1,000 disadvantaged people to escape the cycle of poverty. Two more containers are either on their way or are in the final stages of being packed for Zambia and Uganda. Workaid aims to send six containers each year, helping an estimated 7,500 disadvantaged people.

Philip Roderick

Congratulations to our former vicar, Philip Roderick, on his appointment by the Bishop of Sheffield as Bishop's Advisor in Spirituality and chaplain to Whirlow Grange, where he will be enabling clergy and lay ministers to find spiritual directors. This is a part-time appointment enabling Philip to continue to lead Contemplative Fire. He and Jill will be moving to Sheffield during December. We wish them well.

Looking ahead to LENT

An exciting list of speakers will be coming to Chesham this Lent

February 24

Fr Timothy Radcliffe, OP

March 3

Jonathan Edwards, General Secretary of the Baptist Union

March 10

Lucy Winkett, Canon Precentor of St Paul's Cathedral

March 17

Debra Green, Director of City Links

March 24

John Bell, of the Iona Community

Please note that on Sunday January 17 the three churches on the Hill will be worshipping together at the Free Church at 10.30 am.

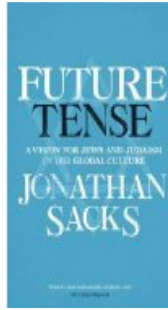
God in the Silence of the Soul

Roland Gillott commends the Chief Rabbi's new book.

"God's voice is a sound you can only hear if you are listening." So says Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks in his recently published book *Future Tense* (Hodder & Stoughton).

This is a book about the challenges facing Jews, Judaism and the State of Israel in the twenty-first century. Particularly with the State of Israel so much in the news, I found it interesting to learn about these challenges from a Jewish perspective. Also, as the author points out, the Jewish faith inspired not only the Jews but also Christians, whose faith grew in Jewish soil.

One of the things in common between the two faiths is, of course, the Hebrew Bible (or Old



Testament). Jonathan Sacks draws on this and helps to make sense of what is inevitably an extended and sometimes confusing storyline. "God does not impose himself on human kind. He is always there but only if we seek him. His word is ever-present, but only if we listen. Otherwise we will not hear it at all. God exists in the silence of the soul when we make space for his voice." These words of encouragement for *active listening* are ones which may resonate with us.

I was fortunate to be given the book by my wife, Rae, as a birthday present after she had heard it discussed on the radio. Others may like to include it in their Christmas list.

Parish Retreat 2010



Accommodation has been booked for a Parish Retreat from Friday October 8 to Sunday October 10 at the Carmelite Priory, Boars Hill, Oxford. It will be led by Alison Hassall.

More details next year but you may like to note the date now.

Activities in January

Sunday	Jan	3	Epiphany. Procession of Kings and incense at 10 am. LIVING WATER. Lady Chapel. 6 pm.
Tuesday	Jan	5	Tuesday Club Christmas Lunch (<i>David Beattie</i> 725333) LUNCH BREAK. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Jan	6	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am Healing and Wholeness. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm
Sunday	Jan	10	3rd Sunday of Christmas. 2gether.
Tuesday	Jan	12	LUNCH BREAK. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Jan	13	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Sunday	Jan	17	4th Sunday of Christmas. JOINT SERVICE. Free Church. 10.30 am Junior Drama Group. Hall 2.30 pm
Monday	Jan	18	Not One for Lunch. Lady Chapel. 12.45 pm
Tuesday	Jan	19	LUNCH BREAK. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Jan	20	<i>Praise & Play.</i> Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
Sunday	Jan	24	5th Sunday in Christmas
Tuesday	Jan	26	LUNCH BREAK. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Jan	27	<i>Praise & Play Plus.</i> Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
Sunday	Jan	31	CANDLEMAS. Eucharist with incense 4 pm. No 10 am service.

Our next issue . . .

Our next issue will appear on **Sunday January 31**. Please get your contributions to us by **Sunday January 17**.



DIARY

**St Michael and All Angels
Amersham-on-the-Hill**

December/January 2009

Regular Weekly Activities		
Sundays	8 am	Said Eucharist
	10 am	Sung Eucharist
	2.30 – 3.30 pm	Junior Drama Group (Last Sunday of the month)
Mondays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Tuesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	10.30 am	Said Eucharist. Lady Chapel
Wednesdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
	7.00 – 8.15 pm	Choir Practice
Thursdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Fridays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel
Saturdays	8.30 – 8.55 am	Morning Prayer. Lady Chapel.
Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays.		10 am – 12 noon. Wheeler Coffee Pot. Wheeler Room.
<i>The Church is usually open each morning from 8 am for anyone who wishes to meditate or spend time in quiet.</i>		

Other Activities in December			
Tuesday	Dec	1	Tuesday Club. Film <i>History of St Michael's</i> . Lady Chapel. 11.30 am
			LUNCH BREAK. Action against torture. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Dec	2	<i>Praise & Play</i> . Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
			Healing and Wholeness. Lady Chapel. 4 pm – 6 pm
Thursday	Dec	3	MILLENNIUM LECTURE. Challenge of the Mytics. 8 pm
Sunday	Dec	6	2nd Sunday in Advent
Tuesday	Dec	8	LUNCH BREAK. Challoner's Boys in recital. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Dec	9	<i>Praise & Play Plus</i> . Lady Chapel. 3.45 pm
			Town Carol Service. St Mary's. 7.30 pm
Friday	Dec	11	Amersham-on-the-Hill Christmas Festival
Sunday	Dec	13	3rd Sunday in Advent. 2gether.
			Communion Service. Free Church. 6 pm
<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>13 – Tuesday Dec 23.</i>	<i>Compline.</i> Lady Chapel. 7.30 pm
Tuesday	Dec	15	LUNCH BREAK. Violin recital, Free Church. 1.10 pm
Wednesday	Dec	16	<i>Praise & Play</i> . Lady Chapel. 10.30 am
Saturday	Dec	19	<i>cafécarols@stmichaels</i> . 4.30 pm
Sunday	Dec	20	4th Sunday in Advent. 'Mince Pie Sunday!' Baptism at 10 am.
			Carol service with nine lessons and carols. 6 pm
Tuesday	Dec	22	LUNCH BREAK. A Christmas celebration. Free Church. 1.10 pm
Thursday	Dec	24	CHRISTMAS EVE. Crib Service. 4 pm
			MIDNIGHT MASS. (With candles and incense). 11.15 pm
Friday	Dec	25	CHRISTMAS DAY. Communion at 8 am and 10 am.
Sunday	Dec	27	1st Sunday after Christmas
<i>For activities in January 2010 please see page 5.</i>			