

The Ambo

December 2006



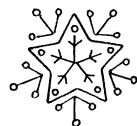
MIDSOMER NORTON
METHODIST CHURCH

Welcome to **The Ambo**

The word used for
a pulpit in early
Christian Churches



We wish all our readers a
HAPPY CHRISTMAS



From my Grandfather's writing in 1875:

He knows and loves and cares;
Nothing this truth can dim;
He gives His very best to those
Who leave the choice to Him.

This is the last issue for 2006. The January magazine will have a new look, as I change the cover for a more up-to-date look.

The inside may change slightly, but it is your Newsletter so the contents will reflect what you pass to me!

We should not stand still, so watch out for changes in 2007!

Your editor, Martin B. Dymond (martinbdymond@hotmail.com) is a member of ACE (Association for Church Editors - www.ac-editors.co.uk), and is a founder member of S.C.E.N.E.S (Supporting Church Editors in N. E. Somerset). As a Church we subscribe to Methodist E-News and Parish Pump, but look to our readers to submit items of interest.

The views of articles in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Midsomer Norton Methodist Church or the Editor.

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MINISTER'S LETTER

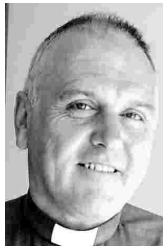
Rev. David W. Watson,
36 North Road,
Midsomer Norton,
Somerset. BA3 2QQ.
01761 412137

Dear Friends,

We are now in the Advent Season, when as Christians we prepare for the coming of Jesus. As Christians we do this in two ways:

1. We prepare ourselves to celebrate again the birth of Our Lord Jesus at Bethlehem over 2000 years ago. We should also remember that the baby, whose birth we celebrate, grew up to be a man who taught about love of God and love of neighbour. His teaching 2000 years ago was radical; and because of opposition from the Jewish religious leaders He was crucified. As Christians we believe that he rose from the dead and that he lives with us now.

2. During Advent we should also remember that Jesus in His teachings talked about the time He would come again to this world. He talks about coming to judge the world. In St. Luke ch 18 v 8 Jesus asks a question 'When the Son of man comes will He find faith on earth?' Although we do not know when Jesus will come again, we must be ready for Him and so we should ask the question 'will He find faith in me?' Will we as a Christian community and as individuals be ready for his return or will we be found wanting?



Advent therefore is a season which provides us all with the opportunity to prepare ourselves to be ready for the coming of the Christ Child, and also the Risen and Ascended Jesus, the Lord of the world.

With this issue of The Ambo you will find a card giving details of our Advent and Christmas services please take further copies of this card to give to friends and neighbours and invite them to come along to our celebrations.

I know that many of you are going to be away for Christmas. I do hope that you will have a very enjoyable time with family and friends. I also would ask you to take the greetings of Midsomer Norton Methodist church to the churches where you worship over the Christmas period.

For some people there will be an empty place this Christmas time. It is my hope and prayer that they will be able to find comfort and peace through God whose gift of Love, Jesus, came into the world. We remember those of our number who have lost loved ones during 2006; our thoughts and prayers and actions must be with these people.

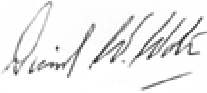
When we look at the world our eyes are opened to the wars, conflict, disease and hunger and exploitation that is all around. This world needs to accept the gift of love that God freely gives and it really needs to receive this love and live it out. At times I think God must wonder if his world will ever be a world of peace and goodness. It can be if all Christians are prepared to stand up and be

counted and live out the example shown in Jesus.

Christmas can be a time of darkness for the days are short and life seems hard. Please remember that Christ, who is the light of the world, brings light and joy and life in its wholeness.

May this Advent and Christmas be for you a time of Joy and Peace and Love.
May God bless you.

Your friend and minister,



REMEMBER THE REASON

FOR THE SEASON



The Bible saysA gentle answer quietens anger, but a harsh one stirs it up.

Proverbs 15:1.

CHRISTMAS BAZAAR (Sat 25th Nov.)

This year's Christmas Bazaar was a resounding success with a festive and cheerful atmosphere. It was good to see so many people, both visiting and helping. The stalls were well stocked thanks to generous donations from Church members and friends, and trade for this year's presents was brisk.

Santa's Grotto



Thanks must go to all the people who manned the stalls so cheerfully and to Redfield Road Ladies Group who provided refreshments. Thanks also are due to Sue's band that played outside, valiantly braving the foul weather; and to SMASH for their car-

washing activities, the weather helping to alternately rinse and blow-dry the cars.

Father Christmas was a popular visitor with several children confiding their Christmas wishes. A new and very busy attraction was the Children's Activities run by Janice and her helpers, thanks go to them.

Finally a very special thanks must be given to the people who, every year, stay late into the afternoon to clear away all evidence that the Bazaar ever existed. If this seems like a list of thank yous rather than a report, well it is, BFG couldn't run the Bazaar on its own. It's a Church effort and didn't we all do well?

Cathy on behalf of BFG.

Face
and
Head
Painting!



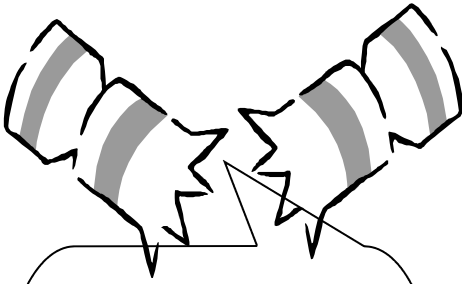
Editor:

To add to that list of thank yous – a big

thank you BFG for taking on the such a responsibility. Your efforts helped raise the grand figure of £3012.

Some of the stalls and helpers





Christmas Crackers:

What happened when Santa's cat swallowed a ball of yarn?
She had mittens!

What do reindeer have that no other animals on earth have?
Baby reindeer!

Why was Santa's little helper depressed?
He had no elf esteem!

Why does Santa have 3 gardens?
So he can go Hoe, Hoe, Hoe!

What do you call a Polar Bear wearing earmuffs?
Anything you like; he can't hear you!

What do you call a chicken at the North Pole?
Lost!



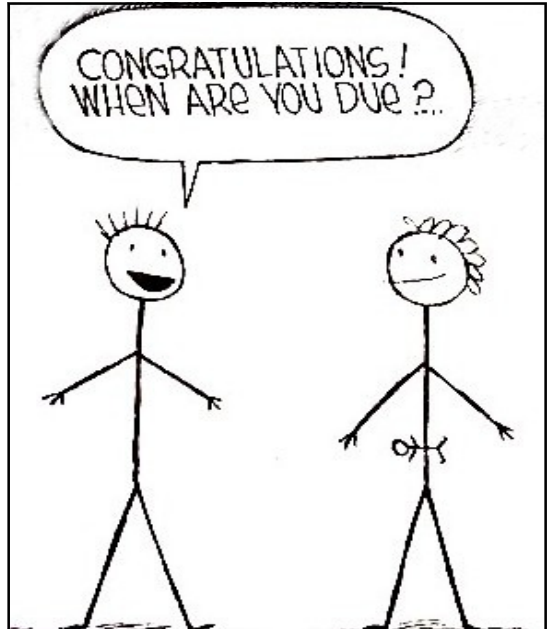
CHRISTMAS POST



Remember to have your cards, clearly named, posted (with 10p per card) in the 'post box'. Or, alternatively, put one card to all your church friends on the board, with a suitable donation (for the money saved on buying several cards) in the 'post box'.



All money should be in a sealed envelope; and if you are a tax-payer, please use a 'pink envelope' so the church can reclaim 28p for every £ given. You must complete the front including date, and mark them 'Christmas Post'. Last posting date is **Friday 15th December.**





This month Marjorie offers two pieces - one old, one new, for our meditation this Christmas. We hope you will find them helpful.

‘Keeping Christmas’ by Henry Van Dyke,

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas Day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you; to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world; to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and the chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground; to see that your fellow men are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy; to own that the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give life; to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and to look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness - are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and the desires of little children; to remember the weakness and loneliness of people who are growing old; to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough; to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear in their hearts; to try to understand what those who live in the same house with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you; - are you willing to do these things even for a day? Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world---stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death---and that a blessed life which began in Bethlehem over 1900 years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love? Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you can keep it for a day, why not always?

‘Come Light of Life’ by John Harvey - A meditation for Christmas Eve.
(From "Candles & Conifers" - Wild Goose Publications, the Iona Community.)

Lord,
in the beginning
when all was very dark, you said:
"Let there be light."
And there was light
and life throughout the universe.
And when the human race

was exhausted, tired and weary,
in the darkness of anxiety,
confusion and sin,
into the darkness you came
as light in Jesus Christ.
God became a human being among us
all.

Once again it is dark.
Not just dark at midnight
but dark in ourselves:
dark with doubt,
dark with fear and uncertainty,
dark with confusing
and conflicting voices in our ears.

Come, Light of life,
lighten the darkness in our lives
with your mighty word of love.
Lighten our hearts with the joy

of your promised coming.
Lighten our world with the hope
that faith in you still brings.

We go out to Christmas Day
in the peace of Jesus Christ.
May his peace,
that lightens the soul with faith,
lifts the spirit with hope
and leavens the world with love,
be yours tonight and always.

MISSION

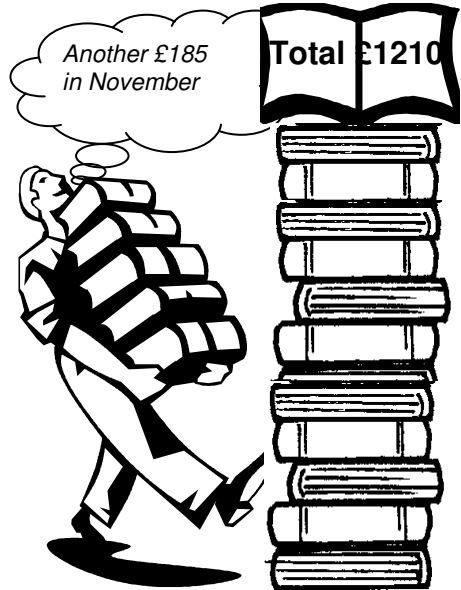
CHURCH PROJECT



November is often a quiet month for activities when folk find the nights seem to suddenly get

darker quicker, the weather changes in preparation for winter and folk are thinking more about getting ready for Christmas.

Still, the 'book-pile' shows another increase. There will be more to report in January – so, watch this space!



They do say Those who keep us waiting give us time to remember their faults.

The Bible says Jesus used parables to tell all these things to the crowds; he would not say a thing to them without using a parable. *Matthew 13:34.*

CHRISTMAS LOVE

Each December, a certain mother, let's call her Martina, vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. Martina had cut back on non-essential obligations, extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating and even overspending. Yet still, she found herself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

This particular year, her son a six-year-old had found it an exiting season. For weeks, he had been memorizing songs for the school's 'Winter Pageant'. As his mother, she hadn't found the heart to tell him she was working the evening of the production! But, having spoken with his teacher, Martina found there was a dress rehearsal on the morning of the production to which parents, unable to come later, could come. Her son seemed happy with the compromise.

Martina found a spot to sit as other parents scampered into their seats and the children were led in, and sat cross-legged on the floor; each class accompanied by their teacher.

The school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as 'Christmas', so Martina didn't expect anything other than fun, songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and

good cheer; commercial entertainment. She was slightly taken aback when her son's class rose to sing 'Christmas Love'

He and his class mates were adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters and bright 'snowcaps' on their heads. The front row held up large letters, one by one, as the words were sung: C for Christmas, H for Happy etc. All went smoothly until we noticed her! A small quiet girl, holding the letter M, but upside down, so it appeared as W.

The other children started to snigger, but she had no idea the laughter was because of her. The teachers tried to shush the children but the laughter continued until the last letter was raised. A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen as we understood why we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos there was a purpose for our festivities.

With the letters held high, the message of CHRISTMAS LOVE showed, large and clear, for all to see:

CHRIST WAS LOVE

He still is.

Anon.



Put CHRIST back into CHRISTMAS

PUZZLE PAGE

1 What word across makes nine words down?

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | L | A | R | A | A | L | E | B |
| | | | | | | | | |
| D | D | E | D | E | E | D | E | D |

2 Each answer is of four letters, running clockwise from the number, The letters in the top rows across will spell a sentence.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|---|---|---|---|---|----|--|---|---|--|---|----|
| 1 | 2 | | | | | 6 | | | 8 | | | |
| | | | 3 | | 4 | 5 | | 7 | | | | 9 |
| | | 1 | | 1 | | 14 | | | 1 | | | 19 |
| | 1 | | 2 | | | | | | 7 | | | |
| 10 | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | | | 1 | |
| | | | | 3 | | | | 5 | 6 | | 8 | |

- 1) Suggestion 2) Caviar? 3) Let fall 4) Liquid meal 5) Attic 6) Admirer 7) Dart
 8) Ballot 9) Donators [6 letters] 10) Big white bird 11) Shortly 12) Equal
 13) Smirk 14) 1760yds. 15) Repair 16) Musical group 17) Difficult
 18) 12 mths. 19) Rend.

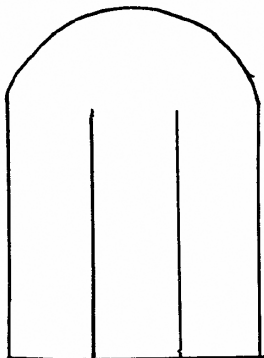
Answers on Page 31.

They do say Never argue with your wife; you may win, then you'd really be in trouble.

The Bible says Sin must no longer rule in your mortal bodies, so that you obey the desires of your natural self. *Romans 6:12.*

LOTS OF LOVE

Time to make some Christmas decorations? Cut out two shapes like the pattern below, one in red card, one in green card. Don't forget to cut the slits.



Interlock the 2 shapes by weaving the strips under and over their opposite



colour. This will give you a heart shape. Use a little glue to hold them together if needed. Punch a hole in the top at the centre and thread with cord to hang your decoration. You can make lots in different colours and decorate them with sequins or stickers too. Nice symbols of love for your Christmas tree.

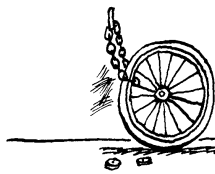


The Cat's Christmas Hymns:

Oh, Come All Ye Fishful
Silent Mice
Joy to the Curled
The First Meow



The rector had his bike stolen.
The police duly recovered it and
the overjoyed cleric immediately
pedalled down to his church to thank
God for its recovery. He went in
to pray. When he came out it
had gone again.



...YOU MIGHT AS
WELL PINCH MY
CYCLE CLIPS TOO!



*From Chris's Autograph
Book:*

Friendship is the golden
thread that ties the heart
to the world.



I'D LIKE TO HELP BUT

This month we look at:

BFG



This has been bit of a challenge for me, as I wasn't around when BFG originally started, so hopefully the information given by other members is accurate!

For those that don't know BFG stands for the Big Friendly Group, begun approximately fifteen years ago and was greatly encouraged by Marjorie and Mike. It was planned as a fellowship group for the young adults of the Church to encompass both social activities and discussion. It is probably fair to say that the group has moved away from the more topical discussion side, a gap that has been filled by SMASH and Debate.

Over the years the group has organised and participated in all manner of activities, fund-raising for the Church project with a charity bed push, trips to Alton Towers, bicycle rides, barbecues, safari suppers and many, many others. For many of the members the opportunity to socialise with friends of a similar age within the Church, and that has included their growing families over the years, has been invaluable. As the families have grown the

activities have changed somewhat and time is at a premium when there are so many other commitments to fulfil with children. Despite this BFG continues to meet at various members houses at 8pm on the first Sunday of each month for a coffee and chat and to plan any upcoming events.

On the more practical side BFG provides the lunches for the St George's Day Fayre and the Christmas Bazaar, leads worship on occasions (recently the first part of the morning service once a month) and ably led by Cathy organises the Christmas Bazaar. We now realise just how much hard work and effort go into these things and wouldn't have been able to do them successfully without the support of the Church family as a whole, for which we are very grateful.

We try to publicise any upcoming activities in the notices and newsletter but if you would like to know more please ask any of the members.

Sarah.

They do say The tiny problem under our nose always looks larger the major problem further away.

WORKSHOP for CHURCH EDITORS

ACE (Association for Church Editors) are arranging Workshops across the country where Church Editors can get together and learn more about producing a good publication. The aims of the workshops are:

To improve the standard of the church magazine through highlighting a number of key areas, including good editorial writing, attractive layout/design and clear print production.

To enable church magazine editors and others involved in local church communications to share ideas, achievements and experiences.

Open to non-members, all can listen to a couple of speakers on subjects such as design & layouts, and writing & editing, with times for a general discussion. Each is limited to 30 participants.

I have been asked to arrange one in this area. So Saturday 31st March 2007 will see an influx of like-minded folk coming to share thoughts and ideas and hopefully to go away with some different ones.

ACE 'conferences' have always been very well structured so David S. and I have some something to live up to.

Martin



BEWARE!

The Trading Standards Office are making people aware that a card may be posted through your door from a company PDS (Parcel Delivery Service) suggesting that they were unable to deliver a parcel and that you need to contact them on 0906 6611911 (a premium rate number).

DO NOT call this number as this is a mail scam originating from Belize.

If you call the number and start to hear a recorded message you will already have been billed £15 for the phone call.

If you do receive a card with these details, then please contact Royal Mail Fraud on 02072396655 or ICSTIS (the premium rate service regulator) at

<http://www.ictis.org.uk>

RETIREMENT ADVICE

Lots of advice is handed out to people at retirement or the end of a working life but these Ten Commandments take some beating:

1. View retirement as the beginning of a new life, not the end of the road.
2. Keep physically fit and mentally alert. Set a daily routine (not too rigid) and stick to it.
3. Maintain a neat appearance.
4. Try not to get under any one's feet, be helpful and friendly.
5. Adjust to your new budget. Don't

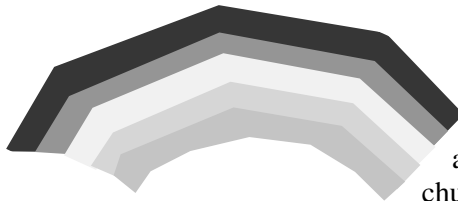
fight it or resent it and don't become a miser – you can't take your money with you when you depart.

6. Tomorrow must always be the most important day in your retirement calendar.
7. Do not live in the past, you have not retired from the world.
8. Do everything in moderation.
9. Do all the things you never had time for – beware of the rocking chair.
10. Don't interfere with others.

Sent in by David quoted in an old Norton Radstock U3A Newsletter.

David and I were on the motorway, heading to London; something I thought I would never do. Suddenly in front of us was this most beautiful rainbow; it seemed we were driving through it. This was as if our Lord was giving me extra faith and courage.

On impulse I had booked to see 'The Sound of Music' and then had doubts about going. However, when we eventually were in our seats and heard the song 'Climb every Mountain' sung by Lesley Garrett, I knew my journey was right.



I may not be able to come to church every week, or help with activities, but God can use us in very unconventional ways. Talking to people at our hotel about my faith I found I was sitting next to a lady whose two brothers were Ministers.

I felt as if I had been on a journey of faith and perhaps as Christmas draws near, may give someone else inspiration to do something too.

Many thanks to Sarah for her support.

Chris.

They do say Good driving is about predicting bad driving.

The Bible says Come, let us praise the Lord! Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us. *Psalm 95:1.*

CHRISTMAS in MIDSOMER NORTON

CAMEO CAROLS

Sunday 3rd December
after evening service.

Fruit punch, mince pies
and apple cake.

Come and sing your
requested carols.

CHRISTMAS COFFEE EVENING

Wednesday 13th December

at Mavis & Douglas's,
7.30 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Punch, Mince Pies, Bring & Buy,
Raffle and Quiz.

Donations for Christian Aid.



CANDLELIT CAROL SERVICE

Sunday 17th December 6 p.m.

Carols, Readings, and Power Point for all to enjoy.

Come and Celebrate the Reason for the Season.

A GRAND CONCERT

of Carols & Music for Christmas

Thursday 21st December 7.30 p.m.

Community Carol Singing led by

Mendip Male Voice Choir, Somer Valley Singers,
Chilcompton Ladies Choir, M N & Radstock Silver Band,
and Organ, with choir and band items.

Free admission-collection for Bibles for Children and NCH

CHRISTINGLE SERVICE

Sunday 24th December 6 p.m.

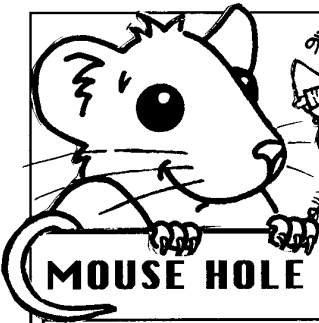
A lovely introduction to Christmas for the children.

OTHER CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday 24th - 11.30 p.m. Midnight Communion

Christmas Day - 10 a.m. Carols and Praise for all.





MOUSE HOLE

Christmas Windows

Make stained glass decorations for your windows:

Pour P.V.A. white glue into a pot and colour with a few drops of food colouring.

Make several pots of different colour glue.

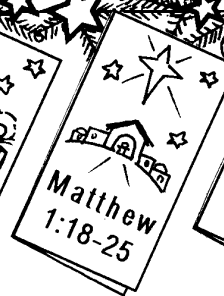
On a sheet of acetate or a clear plastic pocket file use your glue paint to paint a Christmas picture, like an angel or a star.

(A simple design can be copied by putting it underneath the acetate or in the pocket file.)

When completely dry cover the design with a thick layer of plain P.V.A.

To add sparkle sprinkle over with a little glitter then leave overnight.

When dry, your design can be peeled from the plastic sheet and will stick to the window.



God had a message for **Mary**—she was going to have a very special baby!

God had a message for **Joseph**—God's angel spoke to him in a dream.

God had a message for the **shepherds**—

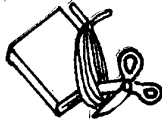
Jesus our Saviour is born!

Look up the verses on the cards above to find out what God's message was for Mary, for Joseph and for the shepherds.

Christmas Angels



1. Wind wool or raffia 30 times around a small book.



2. Tie the top loops together slide off, cut at the bottom.



3. Cut shorter 10 strands on each side then tie to make arms.



4. Tie again at the waist. Glue on paper wings and a golden halo.



P M Hobbs - Memorial Stonemason; Williams & Oakey Engineering Co. Ltd.; Blisters; BANES Community Equipment Service; BANES Commercial Service Works & Construction Division; Rock Rd; Valley Walk; Wellow Brook Court; Wellow Brook Meadow; Welton Vale.

A prayer for all this Christmas season and throughout 2007.

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us, that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. Psalm 67: 1-4

Notes:



MAGNET

Do you ever look at the copy of Magnet, which is displayed each quarter?

If the answer is “No”, take a few minutes to do so. It is displayed on the Network Noticeboard.

You will find an up-to-date, challenging publication, which covers a whole range of topics. This issue looks at ‘Communication’. The features include ‘Gossiping the Gospel’, ‘Understanding Islam’, ‘Music and God’, ‘Am I deaf?’ and the debate

‘Preaching the Great Commission is not appropriate for Today’. Plus the regular items, pictures, poems, resources.

By today’s standards, £2 per quarter for a colour magazine is cheap. Why not give it a try? Let me know if you would like to subscribe, by Sunday 17th December – including the cost of £8 for the year. The order has to be in straight after Christmas.

Thank you,

Jean.

MAKE POVERTY HISTORY CAMPAIGN

In 2005 MPH forced governments into decisive action to tackle the scandal of poverty. In Singapore recently debt was written-off for 20 countries – total bilateral and multilateral debt write-off could now be as high as US\$170 billion. Aid has already increased around 25% to more than US\$100 billion and we are well on the way to the target of US\$130 billion by 2010.

Because of the work you have done, aid and debt relief has made a difference. Zambia has already been able to abolish rural healthcare fees; Tanzania to build almost 2,500 new schools; Uganda to increase immunisations by more than 40%. Imagine, on just one day when Kenya made primary schools free, more than one million children turned up to enroll for school for the first time. When Malawi abolished school fees, enrolments increased 50%; more than one million children who previously had no access to education, now have the opportunity to learn and grow and fulfil their potential.

So, real changes are being made to other people's lives, creating empowerment for the future through health, education and opportunity for all.

However, while much has been done, there is still much to be done. As we look to the future we must recognise how much further we need to go in the coming years. Our activities must be stronger. Our actions are powerful and urgent.

'Everyone deserves a chance to escape disease, illiteracy and poverty'

In 2005 you forced us to make promises on aid. Now in 2006 we keep our promises.

Today 100 million children are not in school, and by 2015 this could rise to 200 million if we do not act. In parts of Africa there is only 1 doctor for every 50,000 people.. So we have a long way to go if we are to meet our millennium development goals by 2015. But we must achieve these goals.

Taken from article written by Gordon Brown in Christian Aid News.

COLLECTORS WANTED



**Wednesday 13th December
11 a.m. onwards**

If anyone is willing to collect with a tin for Christian Aid outside Tesco please speak to Trevor.

The Bible says ...Whoever wants to enjoy life and wishes to see good times, must keep from speaking evil and stop telling lies.

1 Peter 3:10.

OTHER EVENTS AROUND M N.

C A M E O

Come And Meet Each Other

Friday 12th January
from 7 pm

Get-Together at the Centre
Supper, games and crafts
available.

MEN'S BREAKFAST FELLOWSHIP

Saturday 9th December
8.30 a.m.

(Breakfast from 8am)

Rev. Ray Lockhart

(former Rector of Christ Church,
Jerusalem & of the Church's
Ministry amongst Jews in Israel)
gives

'A balanced view of the is-
sues of the Holy Land'

Somer Starmakers

proudly present

**Jack
and the
Beanstalk**

at the Somer Centre,
Midsomer Norton
5th/6th January
at 2.00 pm & 7.30 pm
and

FREE O A P Special at
2pm Sunday 7th only

***Ticket hotline 01761
419805***



Need an extra
Christmas Present?
Now on Sale The NEW
**SOMER SCRIBES
ANTHOLOGY**
(the 12th) 44 pages packed
with stories, articles and
poems by local writers.

Still only £1.

Excellent value for money
from Reception,
Radstock Museum,
Coleford P O, or
Ring 01761 413969.

They do say Money can't buy
happiness; but it makes misery a
lot easier to live with.

TABLE TOP SALE

at

Midsomer Norton Methodist Church

Saturday 27th January 2007 9.00 am until 12.00 pm

Clear out your cupboards and attics, sort out the garage and start the new year with more space, and money in your pocket.

Tables available to display and sell your items for only

£6.00

All table bookings must be made in advance

Refreshments available on the day.

All proceeds of table rent and refreshments to church funds.

**For further information or to
book a table please contact
Heather on 412983**

Nothing to sell?
Drop in you might
pick up a bargain

**Tables
limited so
book today**

DISTRICT PRAYER

† DAY †

Afternoon of Prayer

With opportunities to pray in different styles

For Methodist and Ecumenical Partners

Continuing the 'Pray Without Ceasing' initiative.

Sunday 4th March 2007

St. Andrew's Church Filton

3pm - 7.30 pm including Evening Service at 6.30 p.m.

WHY GOD CREATED CHILDREN

(AND IN THE PROCESS GRANDCHILDREN)

To those of us who have children in our lives, whether they are our own, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or students... here is something to make you chuckle.

Whenever your children are out of control, you can take comfort from the thought that even God's omnipotence did not extend to His own children.

After creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve. And the first thing he said was "DON'T!"

"Don't what?" Adam replied.

"Don't eat the forbidden fruit." God said.

"Forbidden fruit? We have forbidden fruit? Hey Eve, we have forbidden fruit!"

"No Way!"

"Yes way!"

"Do NOT eat the fruit!" said God.

"Why?"

"Because I am your Father and I said so!" God replied, wondering why He hadn't stopped creation after making the elephants.

A few minutes later, God saw His children having an apple break and He was ticked! "Didn't I tell you not to eat the fruit?" God asked.

"Uh huh," Adam replied.

"Then why did you?" said the Father.

"I don't know," said Eve.

"She started it!" Adam said.

"Did not!"

"Did too!"

"DID NOT!"

Having had it with the two of them, God's punishment was that Adam and Eve should have children of their own.

Thus the pattern was set and it has never changed.

BUT THERE IS REASSURANCE IN THE STORY!

If you have persistently and lovingly tried to give children wisdom and they haven't taken it, don't be hard on yourself.

If God had trouble raising children, what makes you think it would be a piece of cake for you?

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. You spend the first two years of their life teaching them to walk and talk. Then you spend the next sixteen telling them to sit down and shut up.
2. Grandchildren are God's reward for not killing your own children.
3. Mothers of teens now know why some animals eat their young.
4. Children seldom misquote you. In fact, they usually repeat word for word what you shouldn't have said.
5. The main purpose of holding children's parties is to remind yourself that there are children more awful than your own.
6. We childproofed our homes, but they are still getting in.

ADVICE FOR THE DAY:

Be nice to your kids. They will choose your nursing home one day.

AND FINALLY:

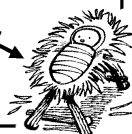
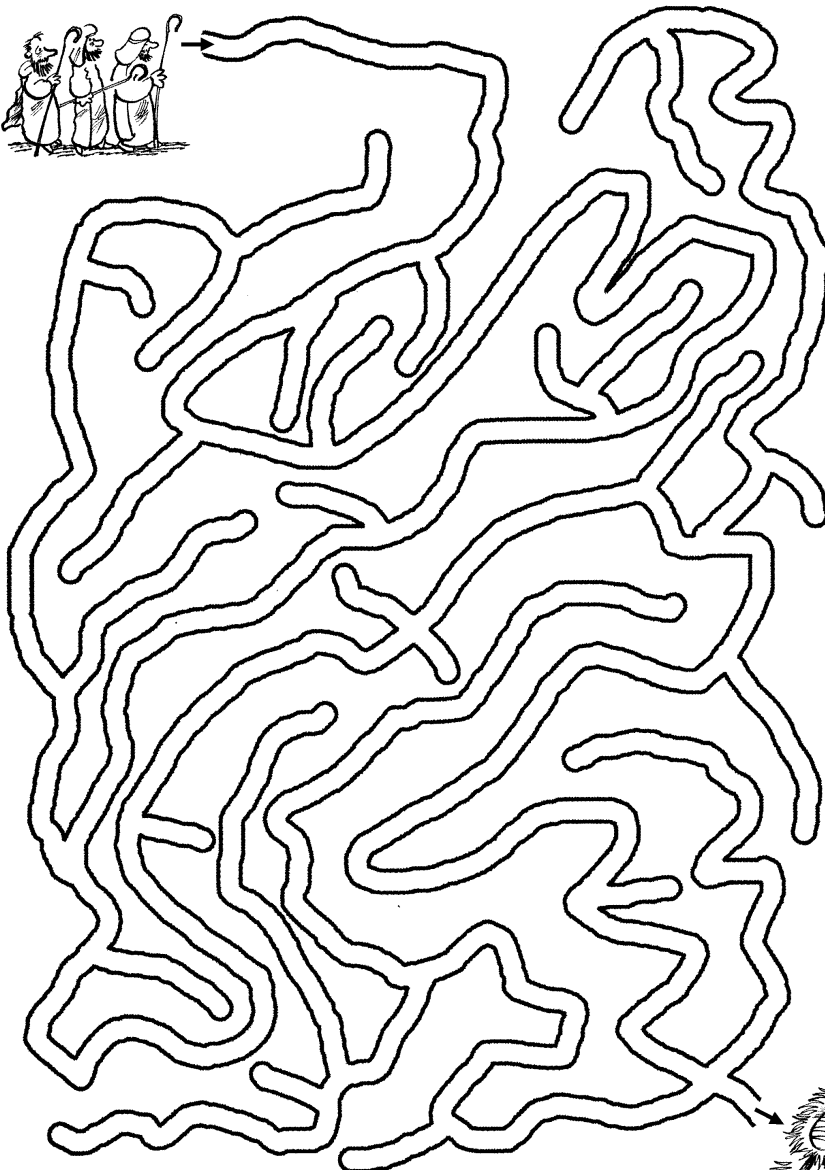
IF YOU HAVE A LOT OF TENSION AND YOU GET A HEADACHE, DO WHAT IT SAYS ON THE ASPIRIN BOTTLE: "TAKE TWO ASPIRIN" AND "KEEP AWAY FROM CHILDREN"!!!!

Sent in by Sarah.

PICTURE PARABLE

The Christmas Journey

The most wonderful story of all time tells of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Some angels gave the good news of Jesus' arrival to shepherds in nearby fields. Can you help the shepherds find their way to the manger?



THE BUZZ 50

These stories from around Methodism might give you ideas to take up locally. Please use the contacts to learn more.

WORSHIP - wot?

From Raunds, Nene Valley, Northampton

We've start WOT (Worship on Thursdays) this school term. It runs from about 3pm until 6, with creative activities, games, worship and a meal. WOT is being supported by a wide range of people from the Church (who are enjoying it themselves) and is already reaching people who were outside the Church family. It is great to see members of the Church becoming accepted as honorary grandparents!

E-mail contact: <mailto:dave@warnock.me.uk>

Phone contact: Dave Warnock 01933 622137

LEARNING AND CARING - a festival

From Chesterfield circuit, South Yorkshire

We've been celebrating God's mission in today's world with a Circuit World Church Festival. We called it 'Partners in Mission'. The day included an exhibition of more than 15 mission organisations, plus web and email links to the worldwide church. In the evening we had fun with dance, drama and music led by Christians originally from Iran, who are now from Hexthorpe, Doncaster.

E-mail contact: <mailto:davidandsylviag@tiscali.co.uk>

Phone contact: David Griffiths 01246 202741

SERVICE - breeze in

From Walton Vale, North Liverpool

We've been running this project a year now. People drop in to use the internet to keep in touch with home. We have a listening service, family access point, library, craft scheme, and placement provider for people with learning disabilities. We share the message of God's love with coffee and light snacks. We see all our café users as a parallel congregation: we also have help from the local RC and C of E churches. The project cost around £200,000 and was paid for mainly by the people of the church who saw church as being a bigger place than within the walls.

E-mail contact: <mailto:sbinymin@yahoo.co.uk>

Phone contact: Rev. Andrew Longshaw 0151 526 1630

EVANGELISM - with shoe leather

From Saltash circuit

We've repeated the walk around the Circuit we first did last year. Over a period of 5 days we linked together the various Chapels by visiting each one and holding a short service and a time of fellowship with those that could attend from each congregation. We talked with people along the road. We may never know the outcome of passing the time of day with strangers, but those taking part it was about relaxing in God's and other people's company. We recommend it: it uplifts the spirit, if not the feet!

E-mail contact: <mailto:keith@brandizepark.fsnet.co.uk>

Phone contact: Keith Mutton 01579 382334

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THE BUZZ NEEDS 'GOOD NEWS' STORIES FROM YOU!

Contact Roger Hutchings <mailto:rogerhutchings@methodistchurch.org.uk> if you have a story for The Buzz - you can just leave your name and phone number.

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MORE E-NEWS

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT POVERTY?

MRDF have produced a six-session study pack for small groups, ideal for Lent. It features challenging Bible studies for small groups including:

Bible readings / Discussion questions / Prayers / Practical ways to respond

Study packs are free: order for each member of your group from MRDF:

Tel: 020 7467 5132 e-mail: <mailto:mrdf@methodistchurch.org.uk>

MRDF, 25 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5JR.

Also downloadable from http://www.mrdf.org.uk/pages/bible_study_pack.php

CHILDREN WANT 24/7 CHURCH

An online survey conducted by MethodistChildren has found children prefer to participate in the fun, fellowship and community offered by churches during the week and in summer holidays than on Sundays.

Steve Pearce, Children's Secretary, says; ""Midweek groups are almost 100% bigger than Sunday groups. Many churches are doing great work on Sundays, but it's clear from our results that children want church to be more than just that - they want to go to activities during the week. Which is great, because 43% of the churches that work with children already provide mid-week activities, with an average of 38 children attending each group."

"Sundays are special, but we're called to be Christians every day of the week and this survey shows that children and young people have a 24/7 spirituality that needs to be fed all the time. We are already doing this in a variety of ways through services such as the MethodistChildren website and free weekly

texting service. We are also involved in various online church projects for those of all ages, but there's always more room for growth."

Doug Swanney, Children's Work Development Officer, added; "The most significant finding of the survey is that when churches do something new, it usually works. Churches need to be ready to take the risk of trying new things - they might just surprise themselves with how successful they are."

Survey results online <http://www.methodistchildren.org.uk/adults/audit.htm>

THIS MONTH'S PODCAST

Toby and Anna talk to Simon Jenkins, editor of Ship of Fools, about the new online church St Pixels. We hear about Tubestation, a Christian outreach to surfers in Cornwall, and Steve Pearce of MethodistChildren and Mary-Alice Gran of the United Methodist Church in the USA talk about the joys and challenges of children's work on both sides of the Atlantic.

Listen to the podcast at:

<http://www.methodist.org.uk/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.webradio>

You can also arrange to have the podcast downloaded automatically each month if you have iTunes or similar 'podcasting' software on your computer.

CHURCH NEWS SERVICE from PARISH PUMP

Advent!

Dark mornings, dark evenings, but the darkness is about to be vanquished by the light of Christmas. And beyond Christmas, and the glorious light of Easter, there is the ultimate light of Christ's promised return one day.

Enjoy the Advent readings: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light", "Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you". Advent reminds us that our God brings light into the darkness.

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Why do we keep Christmas on 25 December?

Christmas is what is known as a fixed or immovable feast, though Christ's birth has never been understood to

have actually happened on 25 December. Around the year AD 200, the scholar Clement of Alexandria wondered if Jesus was born on 20 May (it would have been warmer then for the shepherds!) It is likely that the day was chosen at Rome during the 4th century to provide a Christian alternative to a local pagan festival.

The birth of Jesus is commemorated each year in special carol services, the most famous of which is the 'Service of Nine Carol and Lessons' at King's College, Cambridge. The nine lessons (that is, readings from the Bible) are designed to trace the steady progress of God's work of redemption in the world, beginning with the call of Israel, and culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ.

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Christmas – according to the Gospel of St Matthew

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and come to worship him.”

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet, “And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel”.

Then Herod, when he had privately called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

When they had heard the king, they departed; and lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Christmas and St Luke’s Gospel

It is to St Luke’s wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel’s visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon’s hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimittis.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

Why can’t Christmas merge with other faiths for one great festival?

This hardly shows much respect for Christianity, never mind other religions. It’s not much of a favour to our Muslim or Hindu friends to insist that they merge with us because we really believe the same. That might not go down too well in the local synagogue either!

By mixing up the religious brew, we are not being honest with any of the religions. Jesus arrived in this world making devastating claims - whether you believe them or not, they stand on their own, and do not mix with any other faith.

God's Indescribable Christmas Gift

Paul has one of Scripture's great, if brief, doxologies in 2 Corinthians 9:15: 'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!'

The gift of Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate this month, is a gift that lasts forever. Not like the gifts we will soon give and receive.

The gift of God's Son, our Saviour, is the perfect gift, unlike the gifts we buy. Jesus, the Son of God, who was conceived miraculously and lived a sinless life, was perfect in every way. Yet he gave himself to die for us as the sinless Sacrifice, to save us from the penalty and power of sin. But that was not the end of the story, for Jesus was raised again, and he now reigns in heaven as the King of kings. One day, he will come again. And for those of us who believe in him, his presence in us, through the Holy Spirit, is our hope of glory.

The gift of the Father's love is a gift of grace. That means it's a gift we desperately need but could never earn or deserve. Most gifts we'll be given this Christmas we can perhaps use, but also, most of them we can live without.

But the greatest gift is truly one we can't live without. Without a personal relationship with Jesus our lives are missing the reason for which we were created—to know and to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.

Some gifts can make a difference. A workout machine could launch you into new habits of exercise, diet and fitness. (If you use it!) The greatest gift of all is a gift that will most assuredly change your life.

But it's not your gift until you're willing to receive and open that gift, letting Christ Jesus be Lord of your life.

St John wrote of Jesus Christ: "He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:10-12).

This Christmas you can receive a personal gift from God. He offers you his Son.

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The Snow Geese

There was a farmer who did not believe the Christmas story. The idea that God would become a man was absurd to him. He would scoff about to his wife: 'Why would God lower himself to become a human like us?'

It was near Christmas, and the weather finally turned from unseasonably warm to very cold. One day while his wife was out, the weather deteriorated into a blinding storm. Then the farmer heard a loud thump against the side of the house. Then another thump! He ventured outside, and to his amazement saw a flock of geese. They'd been migrating south but had become disorientated by the storm. They were stranded on his field, unable to fly further, and helpless.

The farmer had compassion on them, and realised that his barn would give them shelter for the night. He opened the barn doors and stood back, but they did not understand. So he tried to shoo the geese in, but they ran in all directions. Perplexed, he got

some bread, but still they would not follow him into the shelter of the barn.

Feeling totally frustrated, he shouted at them: "Why won't you do what you are supposed to do? Why won't you save yourselves?" But the geese ignored him. The farmer thought for a moment: how could he possibly get the geese to follow him into the barn? Then it dawned on him: "The only way would be for me to become a goose. If only I became like one of them, then I could save them. I would lead them to safety."

At that moment he stopped and realised what he had said. The words reverberated in his head. 'If only I could become like one of them, then I could save them.' Then, at last, he understood God's heart towards mankind. He understood why God had sent his son. The farmer fell on his knees in the snow and worshipped him.

His new understanding of how salvation works gave the farmer an idea. He tied a string around the foot of one of his tame geese, and let it out of the barn for a few minutes. Then gradually, sprinkling lots of grain along the way, he pulled it back in again. The wild geese began to follow....

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Planting for growth:

new ideas for countryside churches

Churches in the countryside should consider setting up farmers' markets and using school buildings after hours to organise café-style events to reach out to rural communities, argues a new book released by the Church of England.

Mission-shaped and Rural, written by the Revd Sally Gaze, sheds light on

how traditional models of the Church's work in the countryside should be complemented by emerging forms of ministry in order to meet the needs of today's rural communities.

- - -

Lost in Wonder – new online space for you

A new online space, created by the Methodist Church, invites visitors to join a pilgrimage of discovery, freeing the mind from clutter, calming the spirit and strengthening awareness of and openness to God.

Based on an ancient design, www.lostinwonder.org.uk is an online labyrinth that invites visitors on a spiritual journey of encounter and challenge. A labyrinth is a metaphor for the spiritual journey into death and out again into life.

Lost in Wonder has ten interactive 'stations' that can be visited in any order, each with images, a Bible text, a prayer and a guiding voice leading the guest into the theme of that place.

"A labyrinth is an ancient way to journey deeper into God's presence and then to travel out again into God's world. This is a place of change and challenge as well as rest and contemplation. We hope that people will find in it a freedom that helps them to connect with others who want to learn about God's love".

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Prayers and Poems **Christmas prayer**

Let your goodness, Lord, appear to us, that we, made in your image, conform ourselves to it. In our own strength we cannot imitate your majesty, power and wonder; nor is it fitting for us to try.

But your mercy reaches from the heavens, through the clouds, to the earth below. You have come to us as a small child, but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts, the gift of eternal love. Caress us with your tiny hands, embrace us with your tiny arms, and pierce our hearts with your soft, sweet cries.

Bernard of Clairvaux 1090 – 1153

Dear Heavenly Father, Jesus is the best photograph of you that was ever taken. From Jesus, we do not merely hear about You – we see You!

As the year draws to a close:
Loving Father, help me to live one day at a time,
Not to be thinking of what might have been,
Not to be worrying about what may be.
Help me to accept the fact
That I cannot undo the past
And I cannot foresee the future.
Help me to remember
That I will never be tried
Beyond what I can bear;
That a Father's hand will
Never cause his child a needless tear;
That I can never drift
Beyond your love and care.

William Barclay

Why do the bells of Christmas ring?
Why do little children sing?

Once a lovely shining star,
Seen by shepherds from afar,
Gently moved until its light
Made a manger's cradle bright.

There a darling baby lay,
Pillowed soft upon the hay.
And its Mother sung and smiled:
'This is Christ, the holy Child!'

Therefore bells for Christmas ring,
Therefore little children sing.
Eugene Field

Rock-a-bye baby
The world is your cradle,
The wind only blows
If you speak the word,
Angels will rock you
And sing to God's glory,
The message of peace
And goodwill shall be heard.
Rock a bye baby
The stars are your baubles,
Crafted by you
Then set into space,
Born into weakness
You travel beside us,
Showing us life
In your beautiful face.

Daphne Kitching

He had no royal palace,
Only a stable bare.
He had no watchful servants,
An ox and ass stood there.
But light shone forth from where He lay;
The King of Love upon the hay!

Anon



*We don't sing carols no more...
you 'ave to listen to 'em off me iPod!*

EXPRESSING YOURSELF?

Here are more metaphors from actual GCSE essays (thanks to David).

The knife was as sharp as the tone used by Glenda Jackson MP in her first several points of parliamentary procedure made to Robin Cook MP, Leader of the House of Commons, in the House Judiciary Committee hearings on the suspension of Keith Vaz MP.

The revelation that his marriage of 30 years had disintegrated because of his wife's infidelity came as a rude shock, like a surcharge at a formerly surcharge-free cash point.

The dandelion swayed in the gentle breeze like an oscillating fan set on medium.

It was a working-class tradition, like fathers chasing kids around with their power tools.

He was deeply in love. When she spoke, he thought he heard bells, as if she were a dustcart reversing.

Some people use religion like a bus –
they ride on it only while it is going their way.

DEADLINE

for the January issue is **Sunday 17th December**,
early due to Christmas Holidays and an issue date of 31st December.

This Newsletter (less personal details) is reproduced on our web site,
where photographs are usually reproduced in colour.

Answers to Puzzle Page.
1. DETECTIVE
2. 1. Hint 2. Eggs 3. Drop 4. Soup 5. Loft 6. Beau 7. Flit 8. Vote 9. Givers
10. Swan 11. Soon 12. Even 13. Grin 14. Mile 15. Mend 16. Band
17. Hard 18. Year 19. Tear.
The group of believers was one in mind and heart. Acts 4:32.

THE CHURCH CENTRE is open Monday - Saturday 0900 - 1230
Tel. 01761 410450 Answerphone on at other times
Web-site at www.msnmcc.org
Address: High St., Midsomer Norton, Somerset. BA3 2DR

CHURCH DIARY

| | |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Sun 3 aft eve ser. | CAMEO Carols with fruit punch + mince pie. |
| Wed 6 1945 | Circuit Wives' Group Carol Service at Radstock. |
| Sat 9 0830 | Men's Breakfast Fellowship (breakfast from 8am). |
| Sun 10 1800 | Circuit Ser. for Mike Evans' LP Recognition Service. |
| Wed 13 1930-2100 | Christian Aid Coffee Evening at 28 North Rd, MN. |
| Sun 17 1800 | Annual Candlelit Carol Service. |
| Sun 17 | Deadline for January's <i>The Ambo</i> . |
| Thu 21 1930 | Concert of Carols and Music for Christmas. |
| Sun 24 1800 | Evening Service will be a Christingle Service. |
| Sun 24 2330 | Midnight Communion. |
| Christmas Day 1000 | Morning Service. |
| Sun 31 1030 | Morning Service only. |

2007



JANUARY

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|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Fri 12 1900 | CAMEO Get-Together at Church Centre |
| Tue 16 1930 | Resources Committee meets. |
| Sat 27 0900-1200 | Table Top Sale |

FEBRUARY

| | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Thu 8 1930 | S C E N E S meeting for all Church Editors. |
| Wed 14 1900 | Stewards' Meting |
| Sat 17 | Gift Day |
| Sat 17 1900 | CAMEO Skittles at M N Cricket Club |
| Tue 20 1900 | Pancake & Parsons (venue to be advised) |

December



2006

Activities & Events

Weekly activities are displayed in the Centre's Reception area, where posters for special events will be on the Noticeboard, Details on a weekly notice sheet are also available there.

Sunday Worship

Morning Service - 10.30 am : Evening Worship - 6.00 pm
2nd Sundays - Breakfast Praise 9.30 am (Coffee/Toast from 9.00)
+ Community Mini-bus picks up less-abled friends for 10.30 service.
You are invited to join us at any time.