

Back page focus on a surprising look Christmas...

If you were at our *Carols by Candlelight* celebration last week you will have heard a quote said to be from Napoleon Bonaparte about Jesus - "I know men and I tell you that Jesus Christ is no mere man. ... Jesus Christ founded His empire upon love; and at this hour millions of men would die for Him."

This week I came upon a piece about Jesus from an equally surprising source - Jeffrey Archer. Yes, *that* Jeffrey Archer - the writer of page turning airport fiction and a member of the House of Lords who in 2001 was sentenced to four years imprisonment for perjury and perverting the course of justice. So maybe a slightly surprising source for a *Back Page Focus* in Christmas week. Mind you he's not the only criminal to be drawn to Christ (see the Thief on the Cross and Paul the Apostle for two early examples).

Jeffery Archer describes himself as "what I call an agnostic moving towards believer". And this is how he describes Jesus:

"He was born in a barn, his father a carpenter, and his mother a decent woman, but they were of no significance, and certainly couldn't afford to give the boy a private education. And yet, as a teenager, he was arguing the toss with his elders and betters in the council chambers. He never got a proper job, just roamed around the countryside, unshaven, and living off bread and water and the occasional fish, while offering his opinions to those who cared to listen. He became the manager of a football team known as The Disciples, not one of them a star. In fact the twelfth man rather let the side down by accepting a transfer fee of thirty pieces of silver to play for the opposition.

The authorities eventually arrested him as a rabble-rouser, but couldn't decide what to charge him with, other than the fact he claimed he was the Son of God.

They strung him up with a couple of criminals, and when he finally gave up the ghost, rather assumed that would be the last they'd hear of him. The Disciples were relegated at the end of the season, in fact the captain claimed on more than one occasion that he'd never been a member of His team. When He died at the age of thirty-three, there were no obituaries in the local press reporting his achievements, no glossy supplements highlighting his colourful career, no radio programmes to discuss his legacy, and no box sets recording any of his miracles. But then, He'd never relied on focus groups to advise him on current trends, or advertising gurus to spend millions promoting his brand, or spin doctors to sharpen his image, and he didn't require social media to keep his followers up to date, so you could be forgiven for assuming he'd be forgotten in a few days. So how can one explain that over two thousand years later, Jesus Christ is still the best-known celebrity on Earth? Could it just be that He was the Son of God?"

Ann and I would like to wish the whole All Saints Church Family a very happy Christmas and a God-filled New Year.

Andrew Corke - Vicar



Welcome...

...to All Saints this morning and Happy Christmas everyone - the big day is only three days away and today at 8.00 and 10.30 Ted Pratt will be helping us prepare to celebrate Christmas on Wednesday by looking at the astonishing and faithful response of Mary the mother of Jesus when she heard that she was to bear God's Son.

Plus at a special festive **Breakfast@9** Graham will be concluding our special Advent series in which we are showing the animated film 'It's a Boy!'

What's happening at All Saints in the next two weeks? On Christmas Eve (Tuesday) at 11.15pm we have our **Candlelit Midnight Communion** - there's something incredibly atmospheric about going to church in the middle of the night - do come and join us.

Then on **Christmas Day**, we have **Holy Communion with carols** at 8.00. Then at 10.30 it's our **Christmas Family Celebration** - carols - worship - and a few surprises - all in 45 minutes! Don't forget to bring along a present to show us.

Next Sunday (29 December) we have just one service, Holy Communion at 10.30 (no 8.00 service or **Breakfast@9**). Tim Silk will be sharing with us on the theme - *It's still Christmas - the Nativity viewed from a different perspective*.

A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYONE!

**All Saints Swanage - part of the
Swanage & Studland Team Ministry**



Church family news from the vicar...



Thank you everyone who worked so hard to make *Carols by Candlelight* such a success - it was a tremendous occasion and I was so proud of our church fellowship in showing wonderful hospitality, talent and organisational skill in putting it all together. Thank you all so much! Special congratulations to David and the readers (and players) for a brilliant presentation. And thank you all for inviting your friends along to the event - the church was packed with lots of people who don't normally come to church. Finally a massive thank you from *The Wave* for the offering - we're still awaiting a final total but on behalf of Ro Clark (Wave Chair) and the rest of the trustees a massive thank you.

Do come along to All Saints on Christmas Eve for midnight communion and our Christmas Day celebrations - if you've never been to Midnight Communion before then you just have to try it. It is full of the mystery of Jesus' birth. Then on Christmas morning we have our now traditional Christmas Family Celebration which again will be led by Berno and me. We'll be singing carols, wishing everyone a happy Christmas and thanking God for Jesus. It's going to be fun, glorious and accessible for people of all ages - max 45 minutes. Do bring along a present to show us all!

John Foster's funeral - many of you will have known John Foster. John was a key member of the URC and of the Church in Swanage. He went to be with the Lord earlier this month and the committal will be tomorrow Monday, 23 December at 10.30am at Poole Crematorium. All welcome, but note that it is only a short service. John's Thanksgiving service will be - Wednesday, 8 January at 2.00pm at Swanage URC.

Joining the Eco-Church Team in 2020 - making sure that we keep focussing on caring for the Planet is a Big Job and we are looking for some more people to join the Team. Plus Lucy Vierbergen is having step down from heading it up because she is looking after two delightful but demanding toddlers. If you would be interested in joining the Eco-Church Team and maybe even heading it up then do have a word with me. Thanks for all you've done up to now Lucy.

Two post-Alpha courses to think about in the New Year - we've just completed an Alpha course which was being run jointly by All Saints and Emmanuel. By way of a follow-up we are offering two further opportunities to delve more deeply into the Christian faith.

'First Steps' - the course is subtitled *'Basic Bible Studies for Christians'* and it is great for people who would like to go through the biblical background to some key points about the Gospel. It's being led by Fi Murray who is from Moorlands and is working with EBC as a placement student over the next few years.

'Freedom in Christ' is a Discipleship Course for Christians who have been following Jesus for some time but who would like to go deeper into a relationship with God. It will be led by Mark Hatto and me.

Both courses will run side by side starting on Tuesday 28 January through to 31 March. We'll be meeting at EBC from 1.30-3.30 - tea, coffee and cake will be on offer! If you are interested in finding out about either course do have a word with me.

The All Saints vision - to see the Kingdom of God come in power through the transformation of our community

Home for Christmas - Christmas is a great time to be with friends and family. Probably most people will be making plans for Christmas Day already. But if you are likely to be alone for Christmas and would like some company do please have a word with me and we'll try to make sure that you have a great place to spend Christmas.

Wave Prayer breakfast - there is no Wave Prayer Breakfast in January so the first Prayer Breakfast of the New Year will be on Thursday 6 February at 8.30 in All Saints Hall (please note the change of venue).

Toddlers will begin meeting again on Thursday 9 January at 1.30 in the Hall. Thank you so much Pauline and the whole Toddlers Team for all your hard work throughout the year.

Wednesday Holy Communion - there is no midweek Holy Communion on Christmas Day or 1 January - the next Wednesday communion will be on 8 January.

Because it's Christmas there are a few other changes to our usual programme (check out the events listed at the bottom of this page). But loads of other things are happening instead!

HAVE A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A WONDERFUL NEW YEAR! - LOVE ANDREW AND ANN

Check out the Back Page Focus overleaf on a surprising look at Christmas

What else is happening at All Saints in the next two weeks...

Monday to Friday - we share Morning Prayer in the Quiet Room at 8.15 (but not between Christmas and New Year)

Coffee Pot meets in the Hall each Thursday from 10.00am

Sunday 29 December - there will only be one service that day, Holy Communion at 10.30

On 2 January - the Prophetic Prayer Group meets in the Quiet Room at 8.45 (but not between Christmas and New Year)

On 3 January *Art&Craft@AllSaints* starts again in the Hall from 10.00-12.00

On 4 January - our Hour of Prayer from 9.00-10.00 takes place in the Quiet Room (but not on 29 December)

Do join us - you'll be really welcome!

*Loving the Lord with all our heart
Loving our neighbours as ourselves*