Alpha? Emmaus? Now there’s Pilgrim too

For the first time, Bishops across the Church of England have commissioned a Christian Discipleship Course for people of all traditions in the Church and at any stage of their journey of faith and which assumes little or no knowledge of the Christian faith. Combining a course in Christian basics with a discipleship course is, says one of the course authors, Pilgrim’s unique selling proposition. The Bishops’ purpose is to support the Church of England’s commitment to spiritual and numerical growth, one of three national objectives the Church has set for the five years 2010-2015. The emphasis in the new course, ‘Pilgrim’, is on the Christian life as a journey. It’s publishers, Church House Publishing, say “it approaches the great issues of faith not through persuasion, but participation in a pattern of contemplation and discussion and in the company of a small group of fellow travellers.” Participants are encouraged to practise the ancient disciplines of biblical reflection and prayer, exploring key texts that have helped people learn and grow in faith since the days of the early Church. The course has been written by nationally recognised contributors, the Bishops of Chelmsford, Sheffield and Stockport and leading theologian Paula Gooder, a Reader and a member of General Synod as well as Canon Theologian in two Cathedrals and a lay Canon in a third. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York have together called the course: “A journey to the heart of God and to a living, personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Bishop Alan warmly commended the course to parishes in St Albans Diocese, saying: “I’m glad to commend ‘Pilgrim’. It is a brilliant way to discover more about Christianity. The Christian faith is as relevant to today’s world as it has always been, which is why so many adults are getting confirmed nowadays. It has provided meaning and purpose to generations of English people. It has shaped the destiny of our nation, formed our national character and made us a tolerant and compassionate people. PILGRIM is both for people who are enquiring about the faith and for Christians who want to go deeper in the faith. I hope all our parishes and chaplaincies will use it as part of Living God’s Love.”

Pilgrim is made up of two stages:

• **Follow** introduces the Christian faith for newcomers or those exploring confirmation or affirming their faith
• **Grow** aims to develop a deeper level of discipleship

Each stage contains four six-session books accompanied by a leader’s guide. All sessions are supported by free extensive video and audio resources, available online at www.pilgrimcourse.org

The Church of England’s national goals for the five years 2010-2015 are:

(i) To take forward the spiritual and numerical growth of the Church of England – including the growth of its capacity to serve the whole community of this country;

(ii) To re-shape or reimagine the Church’s ministry for the century coming, so as to make sure that there is a growing and sustainable Christian witness in every local community; and

(iii) To focus our resources where there is both greatest need and greatest opportunity.”
Pope Francis has made a big difference in the six months or so since he was elected, in the Roman Catholic Church and beyond it too. But for me the most striking single thing he has said is that Christian ministers “should be shepherds living with the smell of the sheep”. Francis used this phrase in conversation with the priests of the Diocese of Rome, and he was speaking particularly about the ministry of the ordained priest as one who really knew the people, and he was absolutely right. But I took a far wider encouragement from his words, and a far wider challenge too. Because as we all know, it’s not only ordained people who minister the love of God. We are all called to do so, whatever our circumstances. In our Diocese, over 37,000 people attend worship each week, with about the same number attending our church schools; as well as the many chaplaincies in our hospitals, prisons, schools and colleges and places of work. We believe that every baptised believer is called to go deeper into God, and to transform their community, and to make new disciples. A lot of shepherding is going on, and a lot of shepherds are going about their work, whether they see themselves as such or not.

And when it comes to ministry in this sense, we have a great deal to thank for. Ministry is helping people, and Christian ministry is living with the smell of the sheep. I strongly encourage each reader of See Round to see themselves that way, as a shepherd where you are, ministering with God’s resources. We need authorised ministers in the Church, the ordained and the Readers and the rest; but these people are there to equip the saints – that’s all of us – for the work of the ministry; to release all Christians to be the shepherds who smell of the sheep. But for us in the Church of England – not just us, but certainly us – there is a still wider call. Sheep may indeed be smelly, but what’s that really awful pong? Ah yes, it’s the goats. It’s those who don’t think like us, and it’s those who don’t like us. It’s the growing number of people who don’t know us, and don’t want to. It’s the people who are hostile to us, who mock us, who laugh at us or ignore us or despise us. And Jesus asks us – all baptised Christians – to go into their midst and to ask them how they are, and to say sorry if the church has ever done them wrong, and to help them out and to love them and to share our lives with them. That’s God’s call on the Church of England – to be a community of shepherds living with the smell of the goats. Phew! Because here’s the thing. Jesus’ parable about the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25) is based on the fact that in the Holy Land most flocks contain both, and middle eastern sheep look pretty much like middle eastern goats, and in the dust and bustle of the day sometimes it’s almost impossible to tell one from the other. But who cares? As the parable says, the sheep and the goats get sorted out in the end, and God does that. Meanwhile the shepherd/goatherd is called to care for them all, and to bring them all home, in all their whiffy glory, and that’s our job today, in the smelly church – in other words in the Diocese of St Albans.

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SeeRound is published 10 times a year and is the official newspaper of The Diocese of St Albans, the Church of England in Bedfordshire, Luton, Hertfordshire and parts of the London Borough of Barnet. It is made up of 336 parishes grouped into 20 deaneries, in which there are over 400 churches and 133 church schools. The 39,000 members of parish electoral rolls are served by some 270 paid clergy, around 80 self-supporting clergy and around 300 Readers.
In the last financial year the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust (BHHTC) has paid out more than £174,000 in grants to churches in the diocese’s two counties, supporting repairs of more than £1.4m.

Some of their resource could help your church building and mean not delaying a repair and incurring a bigger bill later.

St Albans Diocese’s rich heritage of ancient buildings - and some impressive modern ones too - all need to be kept in good condition to allow them to function as places of worship and be an obvious Christian presence in our communities. A well maintained church makes a powerful statement to the world outside.

There is some help available through the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust and if a parish is having difficulty closing a funding gap to repair their church it would be worthwhile speaking to the Trust. After assessing your situation, and it is not a difficult process, they can offer grants to help churches of any age which are struggling to deal with fabric repairs. In recent years they have made grants varying from £1,000 - £30,000, sums which make a real difference to local efforts to achieve what some might have thought at the outset, as the impossible.

Recently, grants have been made to churches in Ampthill, Leighton Buzzard, Henlow and Stevington, all in Bedfordshire and Stocking Pelham, Weston, Watford, Ashwell and Hexton, in Hertfordshire. Grants are usually for repairs to floors, walls, roofs, heating or windows.

The cash comes from BHHTC’s annual sponsored Bike ’n Hike, held every year on the second Saturday in September, from legacies and from personal or corporate membership. Are you or is your church a member of the Trust? Membership is only £12 or £40 a year respectively.

To contact the Trust and for more information about grants and membership, check out their website: www.bedshertshct.org.uk, email grants@bedshertshct.org.uk or telephone their Grants Secretary, Archie Russell, on 071767 312966. Making contact could make all the difference to your parish repair programme.

More good news for listed churches

The Church of England has warmly welcomed changes announced by the Government to the scope and operation of the Listed Places of Worship grant scheme.

As the Church of England is the guardian of 12,500 listed buildings in England - the majority - and bears the cost of repairs and alterations to buildings used by congregations and communities, this is very good news.

From 1 October 2013, works to pipe organs, turret clocks, bells and bell ropes will be eligible for claims under the scheme. Professional services directly related to eligible building work such as architect fees will also become available on the scheme.

Full details of the changes and new application forms are available on http://www.lpwscheme.org.uk/

And for any church with a lead roof

“The scrap metal business becomes the first business in the country that hasn’t been in law allowed to deal in cash.”

Anne Sloman, Chair of the Church of England’s Church Buildings Council said: “The Council has worked hard with the Home Office to get this legislation on the statute book and we are grateful to Ministers and officials who have approached this problem with such determination. We believe it will be crucial in reducing the scourge of lead theft which has scarred so many of our churches in the past few years and caused such grief to congregations and communities who work hard to keep our 16,000 parish churches in good condition. The numbers of thefts are already going down, but we cannot be complacent. Every church roof that is vandalised by thieves is one too many and we must all remain vigilant. But this legislation is a very important step in the right direction.”
Christmas Festivals of Lessons and Carols
St Albans Cathedral

The 2013 Festivals of Lessons and Carols will be held at the Cathedral on Friday 20 and Sunday 22 of December—both starting at 7pm. Entry to these services is by ticket only. Tickets are first offered to the Abbey’s own congregations and then the rest are distributed by public ballot.

Please send applications to Public Ballot, Festival of Lessons and Carols, Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, Sumpter Yard, St Albans, AL1 1BY to arrive by Friday 29 November. Please enclose an SAE stating which night you are applying for, and how many tickets you would like (up to a maximum of four). Tickets will be sent out in the post on Friday 6 December.

Other opportunities to attend carol services include Carols on the Hour on Saturday 21 December with choirs singing from 11am to 4pm—no tickets required.

St Albans Cathedral Education Centre has been awarded its sixth consecutive Sandford Award for Excellence in Heritage Education. The Sandford Award is an independently judged, quality assured assessment of education programmes at heritage sites, museums, archives and collections across the British Isles. Other past award winners include Blenheim Palace, Victoria & Albert Museum and the National Museum of Scotland.

During her visit, the Inspector from Sandford followed six groups of children on the Education Centre’s Medieval Pilgrimage Trail and observed a teacher training session. The Centre achieved the top grade in every category.

Karen Wiseman, Lead Judge at Sandford, said, “The St Albans Cathedral Education Centre is staffed by skilled teachers who have an engaging, effective and peaceful style of teaching. Schools wishing to visit can be assured of a memorable and valuable experience for their pupils. I would recommend it without reservation.”

Steve Clarke, Education Officer at St Albans Cathedral, commented, “We are delighted to be awarded the Sandford Award for Heritage Education. We really do reflect the standard of work that the Education Centre has achieved, and it is a credit to all who work here and the thousands of children who visit us.”

The Education Centre is holding an Open Morning on Friday 25th October between 10am and 12pm for new volunteers to join the team but anyone who cannot make this date can contact Steve Clarke, Education Officer on 01727 890212.
More children affected by prison than divorce

Some 200,000 children were affected at any one time by the imprisonment of a parent in 2009 – that’s more than experienced their parents’ divorce.

The organisers of Prisons Week 2013, are asking church members to take this fact to heart and get to know their local prison and the schemes which support prisoners and their families.

Revd Alison Tyler, chair of the organising committee, said: “When someone is sent to prison, their whole family serves the sentence with them. It’s especially hard for the children, who are often separated from their parents by long distances, and seldom get to see them.

“We want to encourage Christians to pray for prisons and prisoners, their families, and all those who work within the Criminal Justice system. And there are so many opportunities for people to get involved with their local jail, or charities supporting prisoners and ex-offenders.”

Churches in England and Wales have long been involved in prisons, through chaplaincies and charities, projects and prayer. This year’s national Prisons Week runs from Sunday 17th November to Saturday 23rd November 2013, supported by all the major denominations. With the title of ‘Stand in the Light’ the week will focus on how prayer and action can make a major difference to all those affected by crime and imprisonment, from prisoners to victims, from families to communities. As well as celebrating past success, the campaign aims to encourage more volunteer participation in prison-related projects, to challenge churches, groups and individuals to say ‘I’m in.’

The Bishop of Salisbury, Rt Revd Nick Holtham said “Prisons Week gets us thinking both about and praying about three groups of people: prisoners, who are locked away and not visible to most of us; ex-prisoners who live in the community alongside us but who are also often invisible - the impact of imprisonment will stay with them for life. There are also other families, who often pay a very high price for their relative’s offending. What are prisons for and what we want them to do? How are we neighbours? This is a week to support the great work by chaplaincies, churches, volunteers and Christian groups in prison across the UK. This is a time to get involved, in prayer and action. Sharon Grencham-Toze, Chaplain to Bedford Prison has recently outlined a few of the ways to give practical help to the Chaplaincy.

Board games needed! We are starting up a support group for younger prisoners, and would like donations of good quality board games, playing cards, jigsaws and art materials to help us with this. No sharp objects, preferably no metal and definitely no glass! Again, please contact me direct via phone or email.

Prisons week. Prisons Sunday is on 17 November, and all of the following week is Prisons Week, when churches are encouraged to pray for their local prison, and maybe consider how they can support chaplaincy work, as well as wider community work with ex-offenders. The theme for the week is ‘Stand in the Light’. Please keep us in your prayers that week, maybe focus on prisons on the Sunday? I am appearing on Good Morning Sunday (Radio 2) that morning, around 7.30 - 8am, and there will also be features that day and through the week on BBC Three Counties Radio. Take a look at the website www.prisonsweek.org

More generally, I am always looking for people to support our work as volunteers in a number of capacities, whether that is coming in on Sundays, helping to lead a group, playing musical instruments, starting a choir, or maybe mentoring in the community. Members of the C of E are particularly under-represented on our wide and varied volunteer team.

Phil Abrey, Chaplain to The Mount in Hertfordshire outlined some of the ways people more local to his prison, in Bovingdon, can get involved. He said: “Come and visit The Mount and see for yourself what goes on. It will help focus your prayers and may inspire you to want to help as a volunteer. We need board games, puzzle books with puzzles that you haven’t done and won’t do, or new books so that we can give them to the men whilst in the chapel, and complete jigsaw puzzles (pieces quickly get lost here!).

Bishops join Credit Unions; you can too

Bishop Alan didn’t just visit St Albans Credit Union (top right) at the end of August: he signed on the dotted line to become a member. If that didn’t signal his enthusiasm and commitment enough, he has encouraged Bishops Paul and Richard to do the same with Credit Unions in their localities and anyone in the diocese to do the same.

During his visit, the Chairman of St Albans Credit Union, Colin Metcalfe, and his team emphasised to Bishop Alan that the Credit Union was saving bread poor man’s bank’. It encourages savers and offers low cost loans to its members – perhaps for a significant household project such as an efficient gas boiler. Other less well-off members, or those with impaired credit status, might otherwise be forced to borrow smaller amounts from one of the many high cost lenders on the doorstep or through the Internet.

Bishop Alan told them of his strong support for Credit Unions. He suggested the diocese might use its parish network to publicise the availability of Credit Unions to parishioners and the wider community. Parishes may also be able to boost the numbers of committed volunteers to run credit unions. Clergy may be often a last resort for those brought low by debt, and can be more aware of the help and advice that Credit Unions can provide. Parishioners themselves could use the Credit Union for loans of up to £5,000 rather than rely on higher cost credit cards. This would help credit unions financially and would counterbalance more “risky” loans to less well-off borrowers, enabling more of them to be offered credit union loans and keeping them clear of high cost lenders.

Encouragement that the Archbishop of Canterbury’s War on Wonga can be won comes from North of the Border, where one in four Glaswegians has a credit union account. Libraries and colleges ban access to payday lenders and new secondary school pupils receive £10 to open a credit union account.

Bishop Richard visited Bedford Money Advice Centre (right) in September and also visited Bedford Credit Union.

The Bedfont Money Advice Centre, which is based in St Andrew’s Church also emphasises keeping people out of the hands of payday lenders. It does this by helping them to budget and plan their expenditure better, so that they do not get caught out by predictable, if infrequent, expenditure.

Next month he will visit a Luton Credit Union, Money Matters and Bishop Paul will mark International Credit Union Day on the 17th October with a visit to Hertsvangers Credit Union’s Hatfield branch.

For more information see www.churchofengland.org/creditunions
For how to contact Credit Unions in the diocese see: http://stalbans.anglican.org/assets/downloads/faithmission/page6srapril13.pdf

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Our faith in Christ calls us to love the poor and vulnerable with our actions. That is why the Church must be actively involved in supporting the development of real lending alternatives, such as credit unions. This is not an optional activity, but a fundamental part of our witness and service to all God’s people. It is also a chance for us all to redevelop and stimulate local, relational forms of banking focussed on serving the whole community.

Royal message greets diocese’s newest church

The Queen, Archbishop and Prime Minister along with many others have written letters of support to Leighton Buzzard’s newest Church. Best wishes, congratulations and on going support to Leighton Buzzard’s newest Church.

Gill Gowing is part of the team at St Mary’s that put together the MAP. She is also a member of the committee of the Rickmansworth Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies, RADFAS. She heard of the RADFAS Church Trail initiative, which creates questionnaires designed by members of the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies for children aged 8-12 and adults and is really for people of all ages! The trail guides the participant round a church looking at the architecture, history and furnishings.

A corresponding answer sheet is provided. The aim is to encourage both children and adults to explore the building, to learn about it and enjoy the experience so that they are inspired to visit other churches.

Gill approached the local RADFAS committee and once St Mary’s Vicar, the Revd Deborah Snowball was on board, a team of people from St Mary’s and RADFAS put the trail together, to the exacting standards required. It is clearly of exceptional quality as Deborah decouled at its launch that she had learned ‘so much about her church from the RADFAS Trail’.

The Trail was launched at St Mary’s at the beginning of term service for St Mary’s School, which was attended by the Chairman of Three Rivers District Council, Les Mead and the Area RADFAS Chairman, Mike Gadsden as well as Councillors Paula Hiscocks and Ralph Sangster.
Camila captivates with cocktail of love & science

The means for helping ‘problem’ children has to change radically if society is to succeed in changing the lives of these most vulnerable of people if they are to achieve the kind of contributing, satisfied, mature and fulfilled lives enjoyed by others, Camila Batmanghelidjh told the Diocesan Penal Affairs Group, giving its fourth Annual Lecture to a record audience at the University of Hertfordshire.

Taking the title, “Criminality and YoYos, the neurobiology of trauma and its repercussions in antisocial behaviour,” and drawing on her thirty years’ experience working with disadvantaged children in two charities, The Place 2b and Kid’s Company, she recounted her experience with disadvantaged children. She then shared the results of research that she has commissioned into the experiences of children in this category. Children’s carers can also become desensitised to the horror of very vulnerable children’s situations, leading to a recalibration of their normal, much as happens with the children themselves. Many of those attending commented on the breadth of Camila’s engagement with issues affecting children and on just how relevant she said was to their own disciplines.

All were warmly welcomed and shown hospitality par excellence at the Jamia Islamia Ghousia Mosque and Islamic Centre, by Senior Imam and Director Allama Qazi Abdul Aziz Chishti.

Children with an experience of extreme deprivation can lead lives unrecognisable to most of us. Camila’s pictures of some of the conditions children endure at home showed how they might live in dirty and disordered surroundings and as she put it, not even have a concept of what ‘tidy’ meant. Coupled with that, they might either have to forage for food in bins, or have responsibility for caring for sick parents or siblings. The stress put on them from an early age, even in the womb, had profound effects on their ability to cope, even creating deep chemical changes in their brains which meant that they were only able to encounter peace and tranquility or a sense of ‘centeredness’ from violence because they mistruck the emptiness that follows violent outbursts for inner peace. Recovery for such children and young people was not provided through traditional interventions which were ineffective and not engaged enough to be effective. What was required, Camila said, was ‘reparenting’ and yes, relentless love.

Just as much needed is a children’s services culture which does not create a climate of failure because of overload resulting from a drastic underestimation of the number of vulnerable and at risk children. This is kept artificially low Camila says, because of counting protocols. She estimates 200,000 children in this category. Children’s carers can also become desensitised to the horror of very vulnerable children’s situations, leading to a recalibration of their normal, much as happens with the children themselves. Many of those attending commented on the breadth of Camila’s engagement with issues affecting children and on just how relevant she said was to their own disciplines.

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Food for Luton Food Bank was generously donated by many including Foxdell Primary School, St Joseph Catholic Primary School, OM Group, the Luton Central Mosque and the three host places of worship.

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12 days full board
Including direct flights from London Gatwick or Bristol
Departure dates: 5, 12, 19, 26 February and 6 March 2014 (London Gatwick), 17 March 2014 (Bristol)
From £1479pp

5 or 6 days half board
Including direct flights from London Gatwick or Bristol
Departure dates: 5, 12, 27 February and 6 March 2014 (London Gatwick); 17 March 2014 (Bristol)
From £999pp

Prices are per person based on two people travelling together sharing a two-occupied inside cabin. Your holiday price includes: return economy flight from London Gatwick or Bristol to Bergen, transfer to Safari Explorer Hotel, voyage in an unspecified inside cabin, full board: 6 nights 4* hotel in Bergen, transfers as applicable.

Not included: Travel insurance, luggage handling, optional excursions not included.

To book or for more details please call
Peter Goord Travel on 01752 364186

Breathtaking landscapes

Comfort on board

ALL VOYAGES BOOKED INCLUDE £50 ONBOARD CREDIT!

*£50 onboard credit is per cabin (£25 for single bookings) on voyages booked before 31 October.
Open Days & Festivals

St Martin’s Church Clapham, Bedford. Two events: Concert by The Kempston Musical Society, Saturday 23rd December 7.30pm. Tickets £7 inc refreshments available on door. Mixed programme of Choral music. Also Christmas Fayre on Saturday 24th November 2pm-4pm, free entry. Many stalls & refreshments. Further details from Andrew Hayes 01234 347603.
St Owen’s Church Bromham, MK43 8HJ. Concert by Fusion Choral - Songs from around the world, choral and pop classics, is on Saturday 9th November at 3pm. Tickets £5 adults, under 12s £1. Refreshments available. For information & tickets call 01234 825454 (am) or 01234 826551 (eves).
St Mary’s Eaton Bray Poppy Prom in aid of St Mary’s and Help for Heroes, 9 November 7.30pm. Celebrate a mix of music from the Festival of Remembrance and the Last Night of the Proms performed by South Beds Concert Band, St Mary’s Choir and Dagnall Community Choir plus soloists Min Min Peaker and Barbara Morton. Box Office 01525 222283, tickets £12.50 and £10. Also Christmas Tree Festival 7 & 8 December. A fantastic display of trees and lights created by the local community. 10 – 6pm on Sat, 11 – 6pm on Sunday concluding with Suu Evensong. Lunches served from 12 – 2pm. Adults £3, Children Free.
St Mary the Virgin & All Saints Potters Bar Lunchtime recitals starting 12.30pm and lasting 40 minutes. Light lunches available from 12 noon with a selection of soups, rolls, sandwiches, cakes and hot drinks. £5 per person at Aitchisons (Berkhamsted High St). For more information contact Duncan on 01582 883084.
St Mary’s Church, Henlow - Organ Recital with Wine & Cheese, recital by Andrew Lucas, Organist at Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Albans, dedication of new organ, new stained glass window and a shared tower, by Bishop of Bedford. Friday 22nd November at 7.30pm.
St Peter’s Church, Berkhamsted. Concerts by Bridgewater Sinfonia, Conductor: Adrian Davis at 7.30pm Saturday 23rd November concert includes works by Humperdinck, Schubert & Britten. Tickets £15. Under 18s free, available Online: www.bridgewater-sinfonia.org.uk. By phone: 01442 873205, in person at Aitchisons (Berkhamsted High St).
St Andrews Church, Byleswade. Announcing an Advent Concert on Saturday 7th December at 7.30pm to be presented by St Augustine’s Chamber Choir Cambridge, Conductor Philip Atkinson & Organist Alexander Knight. Supporting Bishop Apsley Be Repealed. St Mary’s Church, Luton. Luton Choral Society presents Schubert Mass in G, Finzi In Terra Pax, Vaughan Williams Fantasia on Christmas Carols and Ramirez Navidul Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe. 3rd November 2013. Story conducted by Crispin Lewis. Saturday 7th December at 7.30pm. Tickets £12, £10 conc, £5 U18 from 01582 547474 or online at www.lutonchoralsociety.org.uk.
St Augustine’s Church, Limbury, Luton. Christmas Bazaar on Saturday 16th November, 11-2.30pm. Adults 50p, children U12 free. Father Christmas, fun activities, refreshments to buy. Also, paperback books for £1. St Mary’s Church, Aspley End. Christmas Bazaar Saturday 16th November 10am - 1pm. Tombola,Cakes, Books, Gifts, Games, Bric-a-brac, and of course Father Christmas. Adults 50p free for children. Great St Mary’s Church, Sawbridgeworth. Grand Christmas Fair on Saturday 16th November, 10.30am – 4.00pm. Over 30 High Quality Stalls, Food Hall, Raffle: Magnificent Prizes to be Won, Face Painting, Lucky Dip, Sweet Stall, Food served all day: Bacon Rolls, Hot Dogs, and Cakes. Tea. Coffee and Soft Drinks, all held in Church, Church House and the Parish Hall, Entrance 50p free for children.
St Mary’s Church, Marshallswick Christmas Fair Saturday 16th November 10.30am - 2pm. Lunches, refreshments, Tombola, Cakes, Books, Gifts, Plants, Games, etc. Admission Free. Also, Christmas Coffee Morning on Saturday, 23rd November, from 10am-2pm in the Church Rooms. Gifts, books, crafts, preserves and Yule tide refreshments. Also Christmas Fayre by the Stoford Salvation Army Band and other local groups on Thursday 5th December in the Theatre Hall at Sandy Upper School at 7.30 pm. Concert in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support Mission. Tickets £4 each. Contact Colin Osborne on 01767 862032 or Sandy TIC.
St. Stephen’s Church, St Albans (junction of Watling Street and St. Stephen’s Hill). Christmas Coffee Fair – Saturday 23rd November from 11am to 2pm. Festive Stalls include Christmas gift ideas, children’s games and toys, Mulled wine and mince pies and much more! Lunches and light refreshments will be served. All Saints Church, Kempston, Bedford. Christmas Tree Festival on Saturday 23rd November – 10am to 5pm and Sunday 24th November 12pm to 5pm. Free Admission for children £3.50 for adults which includes light refreshments. St Mary’s Church Carlton will be holding a Victorian Bazaar on Saturday 30th November 11.30am – 3pm at St Mary’s Church, Moor MK43 7LP. Fun and shopping for all the family. Luncheons from 12noon, Grand Draw 2.30pm £100 first prize. Entrance £1 per adult, children free.
St Ippolyts Church, SG4 7PB. Church Nativity Crib Festival on 30 November and 1st December 11-5. A wonderful selection, from large church ones to tiny ones that are no bigger than a fifty pence piece. Each has a special story to tell. Refreshments served both days. Entry is £2 and children are free. Also Christmas Concert on Saturday December 7th at 7pm given by the Orpheus Choir of North Hertfordshire, conductor Anne-Marie Hetherington. The programme includes Poulenc’s Christmas motets plus audience carols and lighter seasonal items. Tickets £12 and £10. Entrant interval glass of mulled wine & mince pie) children free. Tickets from 01462 432445 or shellyhcox@lineone.net or on the door.
St Nicholas Church, Barton-Le-Clay, Bedfordshire. Our 12th annual Christmas Tree Festival takes place on 30th November and 1st December. Open 9am – 6pm Saturday & 11.30am-5pm Sunday. Come and view our delightfully decorated trees in our beautiful church. Refreshments available. For details call Duncan on 01952 863064.
St Paul’s Church, Bedford. Christmas Tree Festival runs from 4th - 8th December, 10-4pm. Admission £2.50 per person, with a discount for a group of 6. Refreshments will be available.
St Mary’s Church Walkern, Christmas Tree Festival on Friday 6th December (7-9pm) with Pate & Plonk. Saturday 7th December 11noon-4pm. Light refreshments available. Enjoy this lovely village Church at Christmas and help us choose the best decorated trees.
All Saints Church, Datchworth, SG3 6RG. Christmas Tree Festival on Friday 6th December 6pm to 8pm. Mulled wine and shortbread. Craft stalls. Adults £5. Under 12’s free. (Friday tickets also valid for Saturday, Friday tickets also valid for Saturday). Christmas Fayre on Saturday 7th December 11noon to 4pm. Music, Santa Claus Grotto, craft stalls, competitions and games. Light lunches, tea and cakes. Adults £3. Under 12’s free. Come - enjoy - vote for the best.
All Saints Church, Hertford Charity Christmas Tree Festival. Friday 6th December 9.30am to 6pm. Stalls, Businesses, Schools, Businesses and Individuals are invited to bring a Christmas Tree (Fresh or Artificial) and decorate it for their cause. Musical performances including a Saturday Evening Soiree. Grand Prize Draw, Christmas Wreath Competition, activities, lots of stalls and refreshments all day. Also opportunities for reflection, prayer and worship at set times during the weekend. Contact Dorothy Toy on 01992 589781. Email: dorothe[toyn]@ntworld.com Web: www.allsaintshertford.org
Holy Saviour Church, Radcliffe Rd, Hitchin. SG5 1QG. Christmas Tree Festival 2013 Preview and Concert of seasonal music. Friday December 6th from 6.30pm-9pm (concert starts 7.45). Admission by ticket (inc mulled wine) £10 from Tory Kitchiner, 01462 712212. torievans@greengreat.plus.com. Festival Saturday December 7th & Sunday Dec 8th with 50 decorated trees on display. Live music throughout the weekend; lunches and teas available 12noon to 6pm. Entry E3 (accompanied children free).
St Mary’s Church, Ashwell. Ashwell Christmas Fair will be held in on Saturday 7th December, from 9.30 – 1.00pm. Arts and Crafts, Cakes and Cards, Presents and Prizes. The Choir will sing Carols and Refreshments will be available.
Churches Together in Harrold and Carlton, Christmas Tree Festival on Saturday 7th December 12noon – 6pm, Sunday 8th December 2pm – 5pm at the United Reformed Church, Harrold. A beautiful display of trees, Christmas music and seasonal refreshments.

Special Services
St Paul’s Church, Bedford. Service of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims on Sunday 17th November at 3pm, being held as part of the World Day of Remembrance for road traffic victims and also to recognise the efforts of those who have provided support to the families of witnesses in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Hertfordshire. The service will be complemented by music from the Britannic Ensemble. www.roadvicetorustrust.org.uk. St Albans Cathedral, 4th Annual Service of Remembrance and Thanksgiving on Sunday, 24th November starting at 2.30 with a dove release at the West Door, service 3pm-4.30pm.

Gilead Foundations is a Therapeutic Community, offering a residential rehabilitation programme, called KEY, for people with life-controlling addictions, such as drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness, gambling, eating disorders, self harm, and other addictive behaviours.

Based on a 300 acre dairy farm in rural Devon, Gilead uses the Genetics Process Relapse Prevention programme with our clients.

If you, or someone you know would like more information about Gilead or would like to make an application, please contact: Laura Alm Tel: 01387 851240 Fax: 01387 851520 laura.alm@gilead.org.uk www.gilead.org.uk
WE'RE IN... JUST!

The mission and vision of Gilead Foundations charity is to unlock people who have compulsive behaviours, such as drug and alcohol addictions, and release them into their true God-given potential, through a structured residential Christian-based rehabilitation programme, living in community as extended family. Gary’s story on this page is one of many in which we have been privileged to play a part.

The farm and related business activities provide work therapy, skills training and support. Many of those who successfully complete the program leave the community and establish productive lives for the future. Others, like Gary, choose to stay on and ‘give something back’.

We have just had a milestone moment in the life and journey of Gilead. We have finally arrived at a time where we can start to ‘move in’ to the first of three new, purpose built bungalows. This new facility, designed and built to high standards, helps our students realise the value that God and the community put on their lives. It values them greatly.

The house will give us excellent accommodation for 8 male clients (students), plus 2 male support workers (already on staff) and a new house parent couple, all of whom will live as extended family.

The full completion of these facilities will help the staff and the community at Gilead to maintain the 83% success rate of students still addiction-free after 2 years of completing the programme. We have been raising funds and building this new house for 6 long years, so we are very excited that we have started to move in at last. But we still have a few things to finish to make it fully functional and give the students the best support we can. It will only take about 6 weeks of work to move in part of the first house, but we have a shortfall of £12,000 preventing us from getting there.

We have been working and praying for a long time, not only for the house to be completed, but also for the staff to live as extended family with the students, so that our God-given vision based on the text from Psalm 68 ‘God sets the lonely into families’ can be fulfilled. We are pleased to say we are doubly excited, because not only are we starting to move in, but we also have a couple returning to become house parents in the new house, after being away from Gilead for 7 years.

This new couple will complement the work of Bron and Ian Samuel, who founded Gilead over twenty years ago, and have for many years lived as extended family in the farm house with female students, as well as helping staff to oversee the male students living in caravans. This now gives us both male and female extended family groups.

Would you please help us raise the remaining £12,000 to begin our partial ‘move in’ to the first house? After 6 long years, just 6 weeks work stands between us and this exciting move – can you help us over this hurdle? Loans or donations would be greatly appreciated by everyone here in the community at Gilead.

PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING GILEAD

Monthly commitments of any amount will help us with funding of the students’ fees. A one-off gift or interest free loan will help us finish our first building.

If you would like to discuss details I can be contacted on 07957 433973

Yours in Christ
Chris Cole (Trustee)

To help us correctly allocate your gift, please record your name and contact details using the form below. Thankyou

I would like to commit a monthly donation of £

Donations over £250 are tax-deductible (I enclose a one-off gift of £).

Thankyou

To help us correctly allocate your gift, please record your name and contact details using the form below. Thankyou

We have been raising funds and building this new house for 6 long years, so we are very excited that we have started to move in at last. But we still have a few things to finish to make it fully functional and give the students the best support we can. It will only take about 6 weeks of work to move in part of the first house, but we have a shortfall of £12,000 preventing us from getting there.

Freed from anger, hurt and resentment

Gary is just one of many that have found freedom from addiction, new life and a fresh start at Gilead. This is Gary’s story in his own words...

Mine is a stereotypical story really. I grew up in care homes and foster care from a young age and never really felt secure or loved. I have been an addict since the age of 12 on glue and petrol. The usual story - in and out of jail, girlfriends, kids, no sense of responsibility. I got into class A drugs when I was about 16 or 17 and ended up on heroin. I tried several rehabs and twelve step programmes without much success.

Then in 2005 I injected into my groin and missed the vein. This resulted in a lot of complications and I ended up in hospital. I had two blood clots, no white blood cells and a collapsed lung. I was told that I needed to take Warfarin, an anticoagulant, to remove the blood clots but the risk was that this could start off bleeding in my lungs which would kill me. I took the Warfarin and sure enough the bleeding started. I should have died. Somehow I survived, I knew people who were Christians who were praying for me.

Despite this experience I still didn’t stop using. In 2008 I was looking for a rehab again. I didn’t want another twelve-step programme and I remembered some of the Christians I’d come across in my life. I realised that they still had problems like everyone else but they seemed to cope with them and keep on smiling. I looked for a Christian rehab and found Gilead who said they would do a detox.

I didn’t quite get it the first time I went to Gilead. I kept too many secrets and wasn’t open and honest. However I did meet Kate who became my wife. I’d always said that I would never marry because of experiences in my own family’s life but I eventually changed my mind.

We came back to Gilead in July 2011; this time I was ready and willing to be open and honest. I took the “Genesis Relapse Prevention Process” seriously and found that it really did help. When I properly released a lot of anger, hurt and resentment that I had been holding onto since childhood days, I forgave others and asked for forgiveness myself. It was like the weight of a dead horse had been lifted off my shoulders - quite a release!

I still have my ups and downs, but things are good. Kate and I are expecting our first child together and we are starting to take steps to have Kate’s 9 year old daughter full-time. We have finished our programme and we have chosen to join the Gilead community as volunteers. I want to be able to give back to people what I’ve got from this place. I’m not ashamed to tell people my story and let them know the rewards I’ve reaped from it.

Take a look at our website at www.gilead.org.uk
CHRISTMAS - Many Differences Between The Celebrations Across The World

Christmas is one of the major festivals celebrated around the world and just a quick look on the web brings up a whole lot of interesting details. Did you know for example that not all countries celebrate Christmas on 25th December? Our European neighbour, Austria is one of the first to start on 6th December. As can be expected from a country that was the birthplace of many of our favourite carols, the celebrations are very musical. Belgium also celebrates on 6th as well as 25th. The earlier celebration is dedicated to Saint Nicholas.

Most places in the world celebrate with gifts and decorations and traditional meals. In Ghana the preparations can begin months before Christmas Day itself, which like ours falls on December 25th. People’s homes, vehicles, schools and even complete neighbourhoods are dressed with decorations and lights. Families will try and meet up at the family home by Christmas Eve for a church service, which can be followed by processions in the streets with bands and dancing.

In Denmark, the celebrations apparently start on 25th December with special Christmas lunches on the twelve following days and in nearby Latvia, gifts are given out on the twelve days of Christmas!

Germany seems to celebrate Advent with decorations, candles and nativity scenes playing an important part.

Russia is one of the last to join in the celebrations on 6th January this is in common with the Greek Orthodox celebrations, which begin on 7th.

There are so many differences between the celebrations across the world and surprisingly so many things remain the same.

There will be light and decorations, usually gifts and above all thanks for God’s gift of his son the Christ Child. It is because of this feeling of goodwill that many of our charities appeal for support and funds at this time in order that whilst having a tremendous time ourselves we can find space to think of those less fortunate. We remember the homeless because Mary and Joseph had difficulty in finding somewhere to stay, and the hungry because Jesus told us himself to care for others. We think of the excluded because of the parable of the Good Samaritan.

In this country entertainment and drama are central to the season, with special programmes on radio and TV, nativity plays in churches and schools and in our theatres, programmes on radio and TV, nativity plays in churches and schools and in our theatres.

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There is always the possibility to get away from it all with a quiet break or retreat and there are many places where this is possible. In the end we all have our own individual ways of enjoying Christmas and in the end we probably all come away taking from it just what we put into it.

Christmas Tree Festival
at All Saints Church, Caddington
Friday, 13th December 12noon – 8pm
Saturday 14th December 10am – 8pm
Sunday 15th December 11am – 6pm
Entry free £1.50 including tea/coffee, mince pie or shortbread biscuit. Accompanied Children FREE
At 6.30 on Sunday 11th December there will be a Carol service with festive refreshments.

REAL ADVENT CALENDAR ARRIVES AT TESCO

The Real Advent Calendar has now arrived at Tesco. Church and charity leaders have welcomed this key element of the Christmas Starts with Christ campaign.

The Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, said: “This is the first time that a major supermarket has put the Christmas story so openly at the centre of their Christmas range.

The copy of the Christmas story, in each Real Advent Calendar, allows people to read and see, for themselves, what Christmas is all about.

The charitable element of the product is a reminder of the ordinariness of the family Jesus Christ was born in to.

Warm welcome by church leaders

The Fairtrade element is a reminder to the business world and consumers that we need to be responsible in the way we buy goods. Above all The Real Advent Calendar is a reminder that Christmas Starts with Christ.”

The Rt Revd Tim Thornton, Bishop of Truro and Chair of The Children’s Society’s Board of Trustees, said: “The Real Advent Calendar offers a unique way to share the Christmas story while supporting The Children’s Society and Fairtrade.

I believe it will be widely welcomed by the faith community and others. The Real Advent Calendar is a chance to educate and do good.”

The Only Charity Advent Calendar with a Free Christmas Storybook

The Real Advent Calendar is a great way to share the real meaning of Christmas.

There’s a line of the Christmas story and a Fairtrade chocolate star behind each window. Behind the final window is a 24-page Christmas storybook.

A charity donation is made to The Children’s Society.

www.realadvent.co.uk/shop
Clergy Appointments

Miriam Mugan, Vicar at All Saints Croxley Green has also been appointed Ecumenical Officer for St Albans Archdeaconry.

Coralie McCluskey, Vicar of Eaton Bray with Edlesborough and Rural Officer (Agricultural Chaplain) for Hertfordshire, is to become Rural Officer for Bedfordshire.

Paul Seymour, presently Priest-in-Charge at All Saints Pin Green, is to become incumbent of the same.

Alison Sowton, Curate-in-Training at All Saints Church Oxhey, has been appointed Team Vicar in the Melksham Team Ministry in Salisbury Diocese.

Clergy Retirements

Canon John Pedlar, Vicar of St Paul’s Church Bedford is to retire to Bristol in November.

Monica Robinson, Rural Officer (Agricultural Chaplain) for Bedfordshire (SSM) has retired.

Canon Hall Speers, Team Rector in Chipping Barnet Team Ministry is to become Associate Priest (House for duty) at Chingford Old Church in Chelmsford Diocese at the end of November.

Pastoral Scheme Changes

On the 1st September 2013 a Pastoral Scheme took effect to dissolve the Baldock Team Ministry and create two new benefices, one of which is that of Baldock with Bygrave. Andrew Holford became the new Rector of the benefice of Baldock with Bygrave.

On the 1st July 2013 a Pastoral Order establishing an East Buntingford Group Ministry came into effect. There were three benefices created: Ian Hill became the Rector of the new benefice of Aspenden, Buntingford and Westmill.

Jonathan Jasper became Rector of the new benefice of Barkway, Reed and Buckland with Barley.

Kate Peacock became Rector of the new benefice of Hormead, Wyddial, Anstey, Brent Pelham and Meesden.

Diocesan Office Appointments

Siobahn Cole has been appointed as Synodical & Pastoral Officer.

Ann Jansz has been appointed Pastoral & Advisory Officer.

David Morton (pictured aside) has been appointed as Deputy Diocesan Director of Education and School Buildings.

The Revd Jane Kraft (pictured above cutting the ribbon) writes: “On 25th September 2013 a new branch of Mothers’ and Others was opened at St Stephen’s Barnet, which is part of the Chipping Barnet Team. The original group began at Christ Church St Alban’s Road (Diocese of London) some years ago, but had grown so large and had such a long waiting list that they needed to find a second venue. As many of the children on the waiting list come from the St Stephen’s District, it seemed an obvious place for the new branch. Our hall has regular bookings at the times required so it was decided in consultation with the DCC that the new group should use the church. The chairs are moved back to provide an open area for activities and the Parish Room designated for Golden Time when the mothers and other carers listen to a talk or discuss matters of importance to them. A wall mounted baby changing station was fitted in the toilet; toys were delivered and stored and the rota drawn up for making homemade cakes and biscuits, so we look forward to Wednesday mornings filled with fun and laughter and thoughtful Golden Times. Our first session which began and ended with a short prayer, had 16 children and 10 adults plus the M&O team, and it is planned to hold a toddlers Christmas service at St Stephen’s.”