

## February 2012

# HIGHLIGHTS

**CARERS IN COPTHORNE** a reminder of the tea at St John's Church Hall on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> January between 2pm and 4pm, for carers, to listen to your ideas and to establish ways of developing a Carer's Support Group. For more information contact Liz Logan 01342-713338 or [llogan3105@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:llogan3105@hotmail.co.uk)

**CANDLEMAS** on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> January at **10am**, at which we affirm our baptismal vows. If you have a baptism candle, bring it along, although there will be candles for everyone to light during the service. If you usually sing in the choir, please come and help lead the singing at the front!

Join us on Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> February from 9am for the monthly **Churchyard Tidy**. There's always extra church cleaning for those who prefer! But a good time is promised for all.

At **WORSHIP TOGETHER** during February we will be looking at three episodes in the life of the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was one of the most forthright of Judah's prophets. He challenges his nation's perverted worship and moral decay, and foretells of God's judgement. Judah's response is not repentance but rejection, as the prophet experiences opposition, isolation, and imprisonment. Through 40 years of faithful duty, Jeremiah witnesses the fulfilment of many of his prophecies, including God's final judgement on Judah: her exile. Do Jeremiah's teachings have validity for our nation and our own lives today? *More overleaf*

On Saturday, 11<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm there is a **MUSIC QUIZ** at Church Hall. Please sign the list at the back of the church if you would like to come.

**WORDS and MUSIC FOR LENT** Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent) falls on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. As well as the Wednesday Communion at 10.30am, there will be a Service of Compline at 7.30pm with the Imposition of Ashes. (The ash has been made from the Christmas Prayer Tags.) Then, on the following Sunday (February 26<sup>th</sup>) **at 10am** we will have a service of meditation using readings and music for the season of Lent. There will be appropriate activities for youngsters, so please bring the family with you and stay for refreshments following. If you would like to help lead the singing there are practices arranged for Mondays, 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> February, and Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm.

**six2nine New Year Praise and Pizza at the Vicarage on  
February 4<sup>th</sup> from 6pm to 9pm**

## PRAYER MINISTRY

At every Parish Communion, during the administration, there is an opportunity for you to share in personal prayer with one or two others. We thought that we would try offering this ministry in the vestry, rather than at the front of the chancel.

It is good to pray for one another as part of our Prayer Ministry, not just when someone is in need but on their special days as well. If you haven't already filled in your birthday or wedding anniversary on our prayer calendar in the green file at the back of the church, you are warmly invited to do so.

## CHURCH FINANCES

As I write, the accounts for last year are being compiled in readiness for the Annual Parochial Church Meeting, which will be on Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> March following the 10am service. The Annual Report will be published together with the financial statements nearer the time. However please don't leave it until the end of the first quarter to reflect on your giving to the church. Although I am anticipating (and hoping!) that we will have roughly broken even in 2011, we have committed to increase our payment of Parish Share this year to £45,000. Allowing for envisaged savings this will require an increase in pledged giving of around 7 percent. Please therefore consider your giving, asking yourself whether it is **Realistic, Regular** and **Readily** (cheerfully) offered. If you would like a set of weekly or monthly envelopes, or are willing to complete a Standing Order form, please just ask. And please, if you pay UK tax, use a Gift Aid envelope or sign a Gift Aid declaration so that every pound you give becomes £1.25 to the church. Thank you.

**epiphanies** – three short pamphlets looking at the Story of the Epiphany through the Coming of the Wise Men, the Baptism of Jesus, and the miracle of the Changing of Water into Wine at the Wedding of Cana. Please help yourself to a copy at the back of the church.

**More on Jeremiah** Jeremiah was called by God as a 'mere lad'. He came from a priestly family, well nurtured in the great traditions of Israel. His ministry coincided with King Josiah whose reign was overshadowed by changing political circumstances. For many years the old world order had been held together by Assyrian might. But this was now crumbling with the Babylonians knocking on the door. In this eventful hour Jeremiah arrives on the scene. Jeremiah writes how God touched his mouth to empower him to speak of God's sovereignty over the nations and of the prophet himself. Jeremiah is uncompromising in preaching God's word that is filled with power to destroy and to rebuild. Israel's covenant faithfulness is, Jeremiah warns, a sham; it was a betrayal of God's love. The distinctiveness of Israel's faith had been lost. Israel now longer knew what she stood for and so Jeremiah calls for a reformation, which King Josiah instigates. Jeremiah writes with such passion that perhaps not surprisingly he becomes personifies of doom and gloom. Notwithstanding his name means 'God exalts', he is referred to as 'the weeping prophet', frequently beaten up, imprisoned and exiled by his own people. But there's another side to Jeremiah's message. In his actions he conveys a sense of hope. We will be looking at three of these: he visits a potter's shop and as he watches the pot being moulded he understands God's desire for us to change. In God's hands we are like the clay in the potter's, lovingly and tenderly being shaped. Later Jeremiah writes on a scroll everything that God had spoken to him. He gives the scroll to the King who promptly rips it up and burns it in front of Jeremiah. Jeremiah rewrites the scroll. God's word endures as does his faithfulness. Fed up with Jeremiah's warnings, the King has him put in a cess pit. After three days he relents and Jeremiah is rescued. Yes, there are consequences in what we say and do, but Jeremiah didn't allow this to distract him, nor in doubting God's word.

# 'On the Fringe?'

God has a purpose for each and every one of us, and the Christian journey is a journey of discerning God's purpose for our lives. This journey entails searching 'to find out who I am' and sharing our discoveries with others within the Body of Christ. And yet this journey remains perplexing, as experience tells us that we must anticipate all manner of obstacles along the way. So we need to both find and give encouragement to fellow travellers along the way through supportive relationships and genuine friendships, and hence the importance of Home Groups.

Discerning God's purpose for our lives is much more to do with 'growing into God' than simply about discovering what task God wishes us to perform. Tasks undertaken become expressions of our faith. So, in his second letter, Peter urges his readers to:

'make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.'

(2 Peter 1.5-7)

Fine qualities for New Testament stalwarts such as Peter or Paul, but what about most of us who struggle to keep up and are more likely to be found on the fringe? Well, although we would probably be stretched to name many, we are told something about quite a number of Peter and Paul's companions on their Christian journey. These are the unnoticed, or so they thought, yet without their enthusiasm, courage and support it is most improbable that the Christian message would have spread throughout and beyond the Roman world.

Their contribution to the cause of Christ was as valuable to God as the front-runners. They may have been a motley bunch of people, and have had no idea about the lasting impact that their witness would leave. In this, their life experiences mirror our own, in thinking that our love and service of God goes unnoticed, yet our allegiance to Christ is as pivotal in sharing God's love as theirs was.

Over the series there will be the opportunity of looking at a number of less familiar New Testament characters. We will be asking how their faithfulness enabled them to possess the qualities that Peter sees as defining those who seek God's purpose in their lives; for God lavishes these same qualities of goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love on us today, for 'God is our journey and our journey's end' (Boethius).

## **CONFIRMATION**

May 13<sup>th</sup> at 3pm

At a Confirmation Service, those being confirmed are invited to affirm their baptism vows and the bishop anoints you, praying that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit, who alone enables you to live your life in Christ. For those who were baptised as infants, Confirmation provides you with the opportunity to confess your faith in Jesus Christ for yourself, and declare your wish to turn away from evil and to live your life in the fullness of God's Kingdom. The tradition has also been that at your confirmation you are admitted to communion (sharing in the bread and the wine). However I would never advocate this as the reason for being confirmed. Your Confirmation is your declaration of your decision to live your life in Christ and for the Church to celebrate this moment on your Christian journey with you. (I always say to youngsters who are considering being confirmed that the service also marks the moment when you accept responsibility for yourself for your continuing journey in faith. Although you continue your journey alongside others in the Church, how fast you walk and with whom you travel is for you to decide.) If you would like to consider being confirmed, do please have a word with me so that we can discuss where from here!