

Services

Sundays

08.30 Holy Communion
10.30 Sung Eucharist
10.30 Matins (5th Sunday
in the month)

Wednesdays

10.00 Informal midweek
Communion



Hope

"Hope" is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all

Emily Dickinson

In the dark times of financial meltdown, global warming, and continuing war and terrorist attacks, Voice sets its face determinedly to focus on signs of hope, tracing rainbows through the rain as Malcolm Goldsmith's article puts it.

— hope for the planet in the call for positive action and innovative technology to reduce global warming;

— hope for future generations as children throughout the world are fed and educated through Mary's Meals, and young people are challenged by a visit to South Africa to become leaders in their own community;

— hope for those treading dark paths, coping with Alzheimer's or caring for a loved one with the disease or suffering the traumatic consequences of fighting for one's country;

— hope from the past as we reflect on changes successfully negotiated and for the future as we consider new initiatives like Messy Church;

— hope that as we walk in darkness, even the blackness of Good Friday, that the hand of God will bring us into the blazing sunshine of Easter Sunday and the new life of the resurrection.



Roz Dooner remembers the words that always hung on her late mother's wall.

This verse was mounted in a frame and hung on my mother's wall all the years I can remember. It seems appropriate to recall the words as we move into a new year with such uncertainty and trepidation. None of us can foresee what is ahead. Thankfully!

As a Christian, I find this verse full of encouragement and reassurance and it helps me to keep trusting in our Father. It says to me – step forward in faith, don't worry about the future, trust in Me. I will keep you safe. What better way is there?

I will always remember something Michael Bickmore said in a sermon once. 'If you are feeling down, look up!' This verse is telling us to do just that. I hope you will find the same encouragement from reading it as I have over the years.

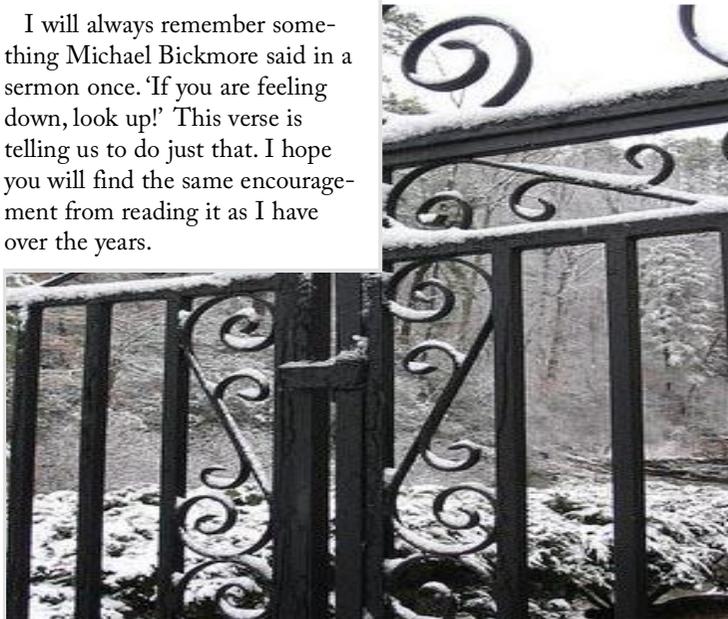
I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year.

Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown

And he replied

Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.



Poet's Corner

The Darkling Thrush

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled vine-stems scored the sky
Like strings of broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted nigh
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

Thomas Hardy

Poems we love

Thomas Hardy can be quite a depressing poet (and novelist), but this poem ends on such a fantastic note of hope that it has stuck in my mind since O level English. When the theme of this Voice emerged as hope in dark times, the last two lines echoed again and would not be ignored.

Heather





The following extracts come from **Malcolm Goldsmith's** paper addressing the experience of dementia in later life. The complete text is well worth reading and can be found on the Faith In Older People website (www.faithinolderpeople.org.uk)

Tracing rainbows through the rain

I want to reflect upon the experience of dementia, both for the person with dementia and also for those who care for them and explore whether it is possible to find any seeds of hope within this devastating illness.

Dementia has its own form of heartbreak. It is a painful and difficult journey for the person with dementia as they move into a strange world and it is a different but still painful and heartbreaking journey for those who stand by and watch. It is a pain that cannot be taken away. We cannot inoculate against heartbreak. We have to experience it, endure it and find ways of living creatively with it. In one sense it can never be taken away and it remains with us for the rest of our lives, but in other ways it is possible to find ways of coming to terms with it.

Not always, of course, but very often there are moments of utter despair. In religious tradition this is often called the 'dark night of the soul', a time when everything seems to fall apart, when things we thought we could depend upon no longer seem reliable. Jane Williams explains it in this way: It describes a time when we realise that God is bigger than, different from, all our ways of knowing and speaking and praying. It is a time of considerable confusion and fear, when we are unlearning what we thought we knew, but have nothing to put in its place. All the things that seemed so reliable, about ourselves, our place in the world and in relation to God, are no longer certain, we no longer know what weight they will bear and yet, if we cannot lean on them, we do not know how to go forward.

Very often people reach an experience of despair when they no longer feel that they have or recognise the resources they need in order to cope. The feeling is heightened by the knowledge that they have to cope. They don't know how to, they feel that they are losing the will to and yet there seem to be no alternatives, no possibilities . . . nothing. For those who stand alongside them there is often little that they can do, they are reduced to silence for they too can see no light ahead; they have no answers, no solutions. But standing alongside is important, perhaps it is the most important thing that they can do. Words are unnecessary; if we find them they are invariably banal or vacuous. There are no words; it is a time to be endured. It is a time when there is no rainbow in the sky, only the relentless rain and the buffeting of the wind.



For many people, the experience of despair is the raw material for them hammering out a vision and an understanding of hope. What lies beyond the present impasse? Can there be a new beginning?

There is now a considerable amount of recorded experience to suggest that, tragic though the experience may be, it is possible for there to be light and growth, even an awareness that we may trace the rainbow through the rain. It is important that carers and their friends look out for these little signs of hope; they are much needed in the journey through dementia. It can be very painful, both for the person with dementia and also for the carer, when the time of fighting and struggling gives way to acceptance, but in that act there may also be rays of hope. Hope that the struggle and pain and heroic defiance can at last subside and calm can perhaps be allowed to break through. Of course it doesn't always happen like that, but when it does there can be a sense of relief. The violence of the storms pass and the rain appears to be offering hope that the morn might tearless be.

There is a strange relationship between suffering and gratitude. It is almost as though the very experience of suffering helps us to appreciate other things so much more, be they relationships, art, music and literature, creation in all its glory or life itself. There is a sense of wonder about the world when you have journeyed through the cloud of unknowing. When the person with dementia dies, as we all have to, their death often comes as a source of relief as we recognise that their journey through this strange land has reached its end. There is sadness, of course, both for the person who has died and also for those who have walked alongside him or her, but there is also gratitude that we have been able to share a little in the mystery, even the majesty, of their life. We reach a stage in our lives when we have to come to terms with loss and sadness, with pain and suffering, and these are real experiences. But they need to be seen in the context of a wonderful world which gives us so much and which has sustained us over the years. A broken and often tragic world but a beautiful world none the less. The rainbow comes to us with a promise of a tearless morn, a morn which may enable us to reflect and be thankful.

Malcolm Goldsmith





Hope for the rainbow nation

Dr Robin Whitburn was a colleague of Heather's in London and together they were responsible for training the many overseas teachers who came to work at their secondary school in Hendon. Here he describes a recent visit to South Africa where he met up with Eugene, one of their 'trainees'.

You're taking students to South Africa!

Those of us who tried to support the world movements against the Apartheid regime in South Africa through the 1970s and 1980s might, like me, find it surprising to consider the country to be now a place where God can be found powerfully at work in healing and building a new 'rainbow nation'. I had never imagined, until recently, that South Africa would be a place that I would visit regularly, and might indeed feel much at home. There might also be surprise from those of us who have absorbed the media material that seeks to emphasise the virulent crime problems that face the new nation. When we say that we go on a trip to Johannesburg and Soweto, we are given quizzical looks, particularly from expatriate South Africans in the UK, who have often sought refuge here from the perceived declining situation back home. I have just returned from my sixth trip to South Africa in this new century, and my third trip in successive years with students and a colleague from my school. The surprising aspect of this visit was the spiritual depth that was so evident through all our activities, and the touch of God on the lives of each member of the group.



In the picture you can see our students on the left-hand side and Eugene and his family on the right.

A new venture for our trip

Our regular visits to Johannesburg and Soweto have usually centred around three things: historical sites and museums, local schools, and wildlife, and these did indeed feature prominently again. However, we had a new venture added this time, because a former colleague of ours in London, who had come over here from South Africa four years ago, went back to his homeland last July to take up the headship of the small Christian independent school, with about 300 learners, that he had joined us from before. The middle weekend of our visit was to be spent at that school, some seven hours' drive away, in Pietermaritzburg.

Seeing Eugene at work

When we visited the school in action for a day, with Eugene there in the middle of it all, taking a clear lead and inspiring his teachers and learners, I could immediately see God's purposes worked out from the year's training through to today. The way Eugene carried himself and set about fulfilling his role bore the hallmarks not only of what we had worked on for the year in London, but also of the Spirit of God anointing him for the purposes of God, rather than the narrow plans of our thinking and imagination. I was so pleased and proud, and have been inspired to visit more regularly and support him in further mentoring and in coaching his teachers to improve their academic classroom work. Our London students were also richly blessed by their experience at Maritzburg Christian School. Having been very anxious about being thrust into this strange environment, and having to board with mainly white South African families, they were overwhelmed by the warm Christian hospitality that they received. The Maritzburg families affirmed our young men in so many ways, and they came away with a new confidence to aspire to lead in their own communities and follow the paths of faith.

I'm going back to church!

Opportunities for expressing practical faith were present throughout the trip, even to the extent of praying that our driver would not be distracted by constantly using his mobile phone en route, and finding that it didn't ring once on the six hour run returning from Pietermaritzburg to Johannesburg! One of the students in the small group of five said that he thought he should be going back to church after the trip, since he had been away from church for a number of years. In many ways the trip had the hallmarks of a retreat, not simply an educational visit. It really showed me how much God can take the lead in circumstances when we pray and trust in Him, and can do far more than we could imagine possible. The God who found a 'way out of no way' for the oppressed people of South Africa who cast off the Apartheid evils, is still very much active in the building of the new nation. Those of us who supported and prayed for the demise of Apartheid might consider what we can do now to support the rebuilding of the nation.

Hope for Planet Earth

The statistics are alarming, the sceptics undermining, is there really any hope for planet earth?



The overall message is clear. It is in our gift to stop harming our planet. We understand the problems we have created and how to begin undoing the damage. So let's do it.

The answer according to the Hope for Planet Earth team that visited Selkirk High School on Ash Wednesday is YES. An expert from the John Ray Initiative explored the science behind climate change, dispelled some of the associated myths and most importantly stressed that if we take action to reduce carbon emissions by 2016, we can reduce the rise in global temperature to 2% by the end of the century. A speaker from Tearfund explained the effects of climate change on the poor and challenged us as a matter of justice to reduce our carbon footprint for the benefit of those in Africa or Bangladesh for example, already suffering from increasingly unreliable weather patterns. A representative from A Rocha told us about the effect on our planet of deforestation and the loss of biodiversity, which is having an impact on the air we breathe, the food we eat, the medicines available to us as well as destroying our enjoyment of the natural world in all its variety. And finally a member of the Share Jesus International raised the moral issue of caring for our home, the place we have been entrusted to look after. Our neighbours have a right to see that God's creation is good and a right to make their living from the earth.

The problem

In the last 100 years the average global temperature has risen by 0.7C. Every year the same amount of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere as would happen in 1 million years of photosynthesis. If we go on as we are, the average global temperature rise by the end of this century will be 6%. The average carbon footprint of an individual in Britain is 9.8, compared to 1.7 for a farmer in Malawi. By 2050 there will be 200 million environmental refugees who have to leave their homes, because it is impossible for them to support themselves there. Every 6 hours one natural species becomes extinct. 12% of birds, 25% of mammals, and 33% of reptiles are threatened with extinction.

Our contribution to the solution

-  Buy local produce and grow your own veg.
-  Choose electrical items with blue logo for energy efficiency.
-  Change your energy supplier to one who uses renewable sources of energy.
-  Insulate your loft with 12 inches of fibreglass.
-  Insulate walls with cavity wall insulation.
-  Turn your heating thermostat down.
-  Lobby your local MP & MSP about CO2 reduction.
-  Become a Superbadger on Facebook.

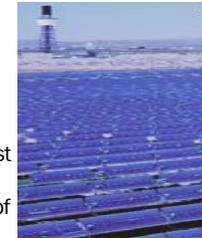
5 Reasons to be cheerful

If, like many of us, you do most of these things already, here are some more ideas from the Environment Agency.

1 Produce your own energy and sell the surplus.
We need to increase small scale generation of electricity from solar panels and wind turbines, together with heat pumps. And we should increase the incentives for households to get involved.

2 Push for a post Kyoto agreement
We need a long-term, equitable, regulatory framework to limit human-induced climate change to 2% centigrade above pre-industrial levels. We need to aim at an 80% cut in CO2 by 2050 and to do this USA, China, India and others must be included.

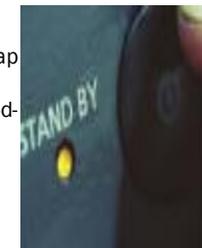
3 Promote large scale solar energy
Solar thermal power plants already exist near Seville and in the deserts of California. They direct the sun's rays onto a liquid until it boils and turns turbines to make electricity. Advances in nanotechnology are expected to lead to huge cuts in the cost of the raw materials for solar power. We can expect very thin layers of photovoltaic material to cover large parts of buildings at a reasonable price.



4 People of faith, stand up for the planet!
We have a collective role in reminding the people of the world that we have a duty to restore and maintain the ecological balance of the planet. We should make caring for our rapidly decomposing land-fill-site of a planet an urgent priority, and set an example to the rest of the population.



5 Power down.
If we must have a wealth of white goods, a heap of hi-fi and a profusion of PCs, we have to cut their energy use down to size. All electrical products must embody the most energy efficient technology. There could be tax refunds for purchasers buying A++ and triple A rated appliances, or VAT rates that varied according to the carbon emission rating of the product. And standby has to go!



“ Every lamp-post, every house a net producer. ”

And Rowlands is leading the way!

“ Giant mirrors could power the whole of Europe from the Sahara desert — this technology already exists. ”

“ It is time the world's faith groups reminded us that we have a duty to restore and maintain the ecological balance of the planet. ”

“ The equivalent of two power stations of electricity is being wasted by equipment left on standby in the UK each year. ”

Changing Times

As we enter a new era in the life of St John's, Brian Riley reflects on how the life of the church has changed over the last 134 years, as recorded in the vestry minutes.

Who provides the hymn books?

We take it for granted that when we come to church, there will be hymn books in the pews, and until fairly recently prayer books would be handed out. It is recorded in the minutes of August 1870 that 50 hymn books be ordered, and arrangements to be made to sell them at a reasonable price. The minutes also record that in 1930, 12 prayer books were purchased for the use of visitors.

Where is the Choir?

When you go to a church these days you expect – or hope – there will be a choir of men, women, boys and girls, all members of the congregation, but the choir of earlier years was a different animal altogether. In the first place it consisted only of men and boys. It was more of a job of work, as the choristers were paid, and were not necessarily members of the congregation. The members were required to be there in the same way as they were required to be at the mill for their Monday to Saturday job, as evidenced by the entry in the vestry minutes for 1902 recording the men were to be allowed four Sundays holidays in the year. In 1916 a suggestion was made to the vestry that lady members be introduced to the choir to make up for the shortage of men who were presumably away at war. One or two members of the vestry expressed their dislike of female choristers in the choir stalls and suggested that if it were necessary to take this action the ladies should sit in the front pew of the nave. No action was taken on the suggestion. The subject cropped up again in 1923 when lady choristers were introduced to make up for a lack of boys. This time there is no mention in the records of where they sat, and they did not wear robes. In 1929 the vestry decided to take no action following a request to robe the ladies. I have found no record of when the lady choristers were allowed robes, but the robes were changed from black to purple in 1932, and I wonder if it happened at this time.

How much to sit there?

These days we know we can sit anywhere we like in church, though most of us tend to sit in the same pew each week. Is this just habit or a throw back to the time when many people paid for their pew, or



Pony trap at the corner in 1895.

individual seat? Vestry records show that in 1875 the situation was as follows:

1 pew to be reserved for the Duke of Buccleuch

1 pew to be reserved for the incumbent, presumably for his family and servants.

5 pews to be charged at £10 for a full pew, £5 for half a pew, £2 for a single seat.

4 pews to be charged at £3 for a full pew, 10 shillings for a single seat.

9 pews to be free, presumably for the less well off.

As full pews were provided, I imagine it was something of a status symbol to have your own pew or seat. In 1900 it was agreed that vacant seats in the church might be occupied by anyone immediately the bell stopped. This was, I believe, controlled by the verger, and it was stipulated that some latitude would be given to those living more



St John's pre 1904 when the Lorimer choir screen and the pulpit was added.



St John's today.

than two miles from the church. Payment for pews continued at least up to 1958.

How many people came in the past?

For many years now church membership and attendance has been falling in all churches. Our numbers at St John's have held steady for the last few years, but how many did there used to be? In 1933 the congregation numbered 300, of whom 170 were on the communicant roll. In 1939 membership stood at 343, with 205 of these being regular communicants, and 28 children attended the Sunday school. In 1941 it was reported that the number of members had risen, but that number included about 60 evacuees belonging to other congregations in Scotland, and at the AGM in 1942 it was reported that 50 members of the congregation were 'serving their country', presumably in the armed forces.

To conclude this look into the past there are two entries in the vestry records which have raised questions in my mind. In 1887 it is recorded that the Walker Trustees were contributing to the cost of the new vestry. Who were the Walker Trustees? There is no other mention of them in the records I have examined. The other teaser is that in September 1928 the rector intimated to the vestry that permission had been obtained from the magistrates to park cars in Clifton Road. Why was permission necessary?

I hope you have enjoyed this look into the past of St John's and I think we have to remember that when changes are proposed, if changes had not been made over the years, St John's would be very different from what it is today.



The Bishop helping at St Mary's Dalmahoy

Mary's Meals

This Scottish based charity is one of two organisations to be supported by the Bishop's Lent appeal this year. Mary's Meals provides daily meals to over 350,000 chronically hungry children in their local schools throughout 14 different countries. In this way the hungry children are encouraged to attend school and, through education gain a better future for themselves and their communities.

The Problem - World Hunger

Today more people die from hunger related diseases today than they do from HIV/AIDS, malaria or tuberculosis combined. In a world where there is enough food for everybody, hunger is still the biggest threat to health.

Children are particularly vulnerable. Hunger kills millions of them each year. It also stunts their growth - and their dreams. Hungry children think about survival, not about going to school. In order to survive they have to labour, whether in the fields or on the streets. Even if they do make it into the classroom, hunger will affect their ability to learn. All of this suffering could be prevented.

The solution - Mary's Meals

An education can set a child free from poverty in adult life. And not only that child but his children too. To gain an education children first need to attend school and then be given the opportunity to learn. Mary's Meals is not only feeding children, but it is also allowing the children to attend school and to be educated. The cost of giving a child a daily meal for a year is on average just £8.40.

Daily Attendance Improves

Poor children are more likely to fall ill or be needed by their families for chores and so they often miss a lot of school. Mary's Meals brings children to the classroom every day.

Concentration improves

Mary's Meals removes the gnawing pain of hunger, leaving children free to turn their attention to class work.

Education of girls is encouraged

Girls from poor backgrounds are more likely to miss out on school than boys. Poor families often expect girls to help in the household. Mary's Meals helps girls attend school and realize their full potential.

Better Grades

Mary's Meals provides the conditions necessary for learning and so improves pupil's performance.



More information can be found at www.marysmeals.org



The Selkirk Council of Churches are thinking about starting Messy Church in Selkirk and encouraging families with young children to get involved. Read on!

Having a meal together is important

4

1

Once a month on a Saturday at 3:30pm - 5:30pm (Probably in Connections Back Row)

Crafts, Short service and eating together

5

2

What you can do -

- Pray
- Let us know if you would commit to coming along
- Sign up to help
- Planning
- Catering
- Staffing

Contact Heather Soeats

6

Messy Church in Rainham

3

Why I Support

Christine Sterba, a friend of Janette Fell, explains what Combat Stress means to her

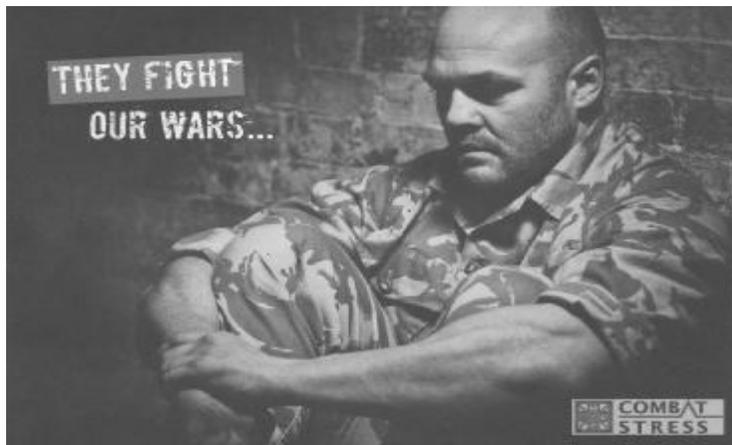
My husband is a Falklands Veteran. When he went to the South Atlantic he was a thirty-five year old Warrant Officer. He was mature, used to responsibility, well used to dealing with trauma and physically extremely fit. In short, he was 'bullet proof' and could not have been more prepared for the task ahead.

He and his colleagues were kept almost constantly busy dealing with a large number of casualties, Argentinian soldiers and airmen as well as our own soldiers. They were under sustained air attack, were bombed and subsequently worked with a 1000lb unexploded bomb above their heads.

I am so proud of what he and his comrades achieved. They came home, most of them, they had some leave and they went back to work. All seemed back to normal, but then my husband started to show a variety of worrying symptoms. He had mood swings, nightmares, night sweats, flashbacks, deep depressions, apathy, no energy - all the symptoms of PTSD had we only known it.

He left the army, disillusioned and depressed. We struggled on until an old friend from his army days suggested a charity he'd heard about called Combat Stress. We contacted them and a welfare officer came to call. An assessment visit to one of their treatment centres was arranged and there he saw a psychiatrist who really understood the problem, but, most of all, he was in the company of other veterans who were suffering as he was.

continued on following page



Holy Week and Easter Services

Sunday 5th April	Ashkirk Parish Church 7.30pm
Monday 6th April	United Reformed Church 7.30pm
Tuesday 7th April	Baptist Church 7.30pm
Wednesday 8th April	Parish Church 7.30pm
Maunday Thursday 9th April	St John's Eucharist and stripping of the altar. 7.30pm
Good Friday 10th April	St John's Meditation service 12noon - 1pm Our Lady and St Joseph's 3.00pm Parish Church 7.30pm
Saturday 11th April	St John's Easter Vigil and renewal of baptismal vows. 7.30pm
Easter Sunday 12th April	Auld Kirkyaird 7.00am St John's Holy Communion 8.30am and 10.30am



He now goes for treatment there for two weeks, three times a year and this has wrought an incalculable difference to both of our lives. He has gained insight into the illness and learned coping strategies. He has made many friends among the veterans and the staff and we both feel them to be more of an extended family than a psychiatric treatment centre.

There has been a huge increase in the numbers of veterans seeking help following service in Bosnia, Kosova and Iraq. With greater awareness of PTSD and its devastating effect hopefully the stigma of mental illness will decrease and those affected will seek treatment sooner. Even so, the rise in numbers we are seeing now must surely be only the bow wave of those traumatised by their service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Combat Stress, celebrating its 90th birthday this year, is a charity which makes a real difference to a great many lives and richly deserves our support.

**Next Issue Copy
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SNIPPETS

Lent Groups

You may have missed the first two but it's not too late to join!

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS



Week 3: 'Once I was Blind ...'

Week 4: The Resurrection
and the Life

Week 5: 'What is Truth?'

For details of time and place
contact Rev David Sceats

Tel. 01750 21364

Games Evening

Come to a Games Evening in the Church Hall on Friday 24th April at 7.30pm, organised by Gill Bickmore with help from other members of the Country Group. Have fun and make a contribution to the Bishop's Lent Appeal.



Away Day

Book your place at St John's Away Day on Saturday 16th May at Whitechester Christian Guest House and Retreat.

The day begins at 10.30am with coffee, and will finish about 4pm. Lunch and tea will also be provided. There is no charge for coming and shared transport will be arranged.

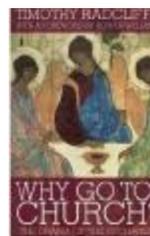


Coffee Morning

St John's coffee morning on Saturday June 6 in the Parish Hall from 10 am to 12 noon.

Contributions are needed for the following stalls: plants, cakes and candy home made preserves, bric a brac, gifts cards and books.

Lent Book



It's not too late to read it. Order a copy from our local bookshop, Amazon.com, or your friendly neighbourhood rec-tor. Even better, borrow a friend's.



Congratulations

to

Gareth and Jane Saunders on the birth of Reuben and Joshua
Craig and Charlotte Shortel on the birth of Lilidh and Ben and Bridget Frankel on the birth of Joseph.