

Thought for the Month

A year ago, the Growing in Faith team organised a Day on prayer with workshops lead by various people, and begun by a keynote speech by the Dean of Saint Albans, Jeffrey John, which was great, and provided a very good introduction to what many people agreed was a very interesting and enriching day. I agreed to give a closing talk, which I was happy to do, but which did not as it turned out work as well as I had hoped: I say this simply as an honest reflection. I was not able to put together all of the points I wanted to make, and make them comprehensible. So, I am going to try again now: you have been warned!!

1. Prayer is the name for our side of the God-Human relationship. Most human relationships don't have a special name, except for family ones. But because our relationship with God is unique, it has a special all-encompassing name: "prayer". [Grace is the name for God's side of the same relationship: prayer is the overall name for our relationship with God, and grace is the overall name for His relationship with us].
2. One of the unique things about our relationship with God is that it is endless and infinite. Most relationships are 'active' only some of the time. Our relationships change and develop, for better or worse, depending on all sorts of factors, but we are not usually permanently aware of and relating to other people, even if we are madly in love with them. We do stop thinking about them occasionally, and they us as well.
3. And this is true of our relationship with God, too: we forget Him a great deal, perhaps even only thinking of Him on Sundays, or as we go to sleep and say our prayers at night, or when we are in distress.
4. But God never forgets us. There is no moment when we are not absolutely present to Him, and when He is not totally, passionately in love with us.
5. This means that although we don't think about God very much, perhaps, and so don't think of ourselves as praying much, from God's viewpoint we are always praying: because everything we do, think, feel or say is present to Him: it's a bit like leaving the 'phone off the hook so that it picks everything up!
6. So there is a kind of disjunction between our view of prayer, as something we do occasionally when we think about it, and God's view, which is that it is happening all the time.

7. This discrepancy also affects our view of what prayer is for. We tend to think that prayer is there so that we can get in touch with God to ask for things: help for ourselves or our friends etcetera. However, although this is a perfectly right element to prayer, the real purpose of prayer is not to change things to suit us, even if for a good reason, to but change us to suit God. Prayer is about God forming us into unique reflections or embodiments of the image of His Son.

8. So prayer is not just something we have to concentrate about. Prayer is everything we are, conscious or not. Indeed, unconscious prayer that we do not know we are doing, can still be very powerful and effective as a vehicle for God.

9. Some of the varieties of prayer include:

Giving God glory, consciously in songs of praise etcetera, and unconsciously when we use our minds and bodies as they were meant to be used, doing things well, beautifully or artistically: Art and sport can be signs of grace!

Praying for others, consciously by holding them before God in our minds, and unconsciously when we act as God's hands in what the Dean called this "closed-system" that God has created: when we give to charity or help others in any way, these are symptoms of grace.

Confessing our own sin and expressing the anguish of creation and its sin, consciously in all those times when we confess our sin, and also when we pray "why, Lord", or "how can you let this happen", and unconsciously in the sin we allow ourselves to commit, and the spiritual weaknesses we do not confront, which are themselves a kind of 'teenage rebellion'. Grace here is shown in the love to which we can always return: the greater our sin, the greater this love must appear.

Letting God transform the word through us, consciously by meditating on Him, reading the Bible, and attending worship, and unconsciously by having once been baptised or offered to God, allowing our souls to be bathed unknowingly in His Spirit. Grace here is expressed by our being priests for creation, offering ourselves and creation in us.

10. And it is this last category that is the most important: that for which all things were made. It finds its supreme expression in liturgical prayer, our shared expression of our identity as members of one another, culminating in the Eucharist, which "is the great sacrifice of praise by which the Church speaks on behalf of the whole cre-ation. ... The Eucharist ... signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit."

Revd. Bernard

The Parish Registers



Funerals

29th November

Pearl Morton



If you have a smart phone with a QR code scanner (download from app store) this will take you to the St Leonard's website

Deep Philosophical Questions

Why is there a light in the fridge but not in the freezer?

Why doesn't glue stick to the inside of the bottle?

How is it that one careless match can start a forest fire but it takes a whole box to light a campfire?

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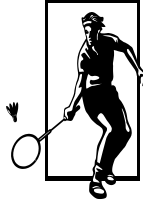
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How I experience God

Remembering some of the highlights of my visit to the Holy Land last October recently made me think about how I experience God which I would like to share.

There were several moments during our busy trip when I felt especially close to God and experienced His presence. Each occasion was unique but they were bound together with a common theme - quiet, peace and tranquillity.

One such occasion was as we sat on a boat in the evening on the Sea of Galilee just before sunset, with no engines running, no talking or singing and no noise from the hustle and bustle from the towns on the shoreline - only the gentle **lapping of water on the sides of the boat. I could feel God's presence beside me** in that moment of quiet and tranquillity - I felt a sense of inner peace and stillness as He held me close. The Gospels tell us that Jesus and the disciples sat in boats on this sea as I was doing and they would have seen the same **sunset I was seeing. Whilst I can't know exactly where he walked, taught or sat or which bit of the shore he and the disciples sailed from, I believe that he had been somewhere close by and that it was the place where he began his ministry, calling the first disciples to follow him. In that quiet moment of being in God's presence, I too felt a sense of being called to follow and to be a disciple.**

The Gospels show us how important quiet places were to Jesus so that he could pray, spend time with his Father, whether in the desert, deserted places, on a mountain or possibly somewhere on the shore nearby. For me, times of quiet are important in my search to know God better. They are times when I can empty my mind - even if only briefly, to be quiet and experience His presence; to pray and to reflect on some words of Scripture or other **reading; to pray about the day to come or that just gone. If I'm unable to spend time in what I call 'my quiet space' - a special corner at home that I've created for my prayer and reflection - or at other times during the day, I'll take a moment to pause from what I'm doing or perhaps turn off the radio whilst driving, just to be quiet, to reflect and pray, to thank God for His love for me and all I have.**

The quiet, peace and tranquillity of that moment on the boat and my other special experiences in the Holy Land will be abiding memories. I have some photos from those moments which I can look at during my quiet time or whilst working. They make me feel close to God - often closer than I did before the trip - and also help bring new depth and meaning to what He is saying to me.

How do you experience God? Do you have any special photos or objects that help you to feel closer to God? Please do talk to me or drop me an email - **I'd love to share your thoughts and experience.**

Tricia Humber



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WOMEN'S GROUP

In November, we were taken behind the scenes of Luton and Dunstable Hospital Radio by Mr Glynn Davies, Chairman.

In his humorous talk, he told us how, when and where the radio was begun and how it has developed. It is run by a band of enthusiastic volunteers, giving talks, quizzes, music programmes etc. They are helped by panto stars who visit the hospital and help to raise funds.

Christmas began early for us. We met at Frost's Garden Centre for our end of year lunch and a wander around the centre. December saw us in the Church Hall for the Christmas meeting. We ate Christmas goodies and shared memories, poems and friendship. Everyone had a small gift, it was suspected that a gentleman in a red coat with a white beard had left them!

In January, it was the New Year Lunch at The Star in Heath Road. Everyone enjoyed their lunch. It is always a pleasure to meet for lunch in pleasant surroundings.

Our speaker on 9th February is Mr Martin Cliffe, who will be giving us advice on Making Our Will.

Do join us in the Church Hall if this is of interest to you.

Barbara Ellis
Chairwoman

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1		2		3		4		5			6			7
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						36								

Solution to puzzle No179.

Across: 1 Buds, 3 Requesting, 10 Go-ahead, 11 Scented, 12 Free-wheel,
 13 Durer, 14 Application, 18 Weigh anchor, 21, Tie-up, 22 Associate,
 24 Heave-ho, 25 Pungent, 26 Stetson- hat, 27 Hyde.

Down: 1 Beg-off, 2 Dealer, 4 Endue, 5 Unselfish, 6 Speedway-racing,
 7 Intermix, 8 Gaderine, 9 See what happens, 15 Pantaloon,
 16 Swatches, 17 Wine lake, 19 Barely 20 Beetle, 23 Sepia.

CLUES

ACROSS

- 1 Reviled at sea and Edward is rescued (9)
- 8 Misfortune – quite the opposite (7)
- 9 It makes Capri so ordinary (7)
- 10 Comic tailor misses gold and gets the bird (7)
- 13 Tutor's top form lack power and leaves hurriedly (5,3)
- 14 Did he invite one to see the headless spectre? (4)
- 16 Anaesthetised exactly when you should be? (4,2,4)
- 20 They come round when apse is rebuilt (4)
- 22 Be inclined to put a man outside (4)
- 24 "Power Strike" is in the charts at the moment (7,3)
- 28 Strong smell from a tree, kind of aromatic (4)
- 29 Fulfils a pressing need? (8)
- 31 Attempt to accommodate the elderly that ends sadly (7)
- 34 What's in the garden may be left unsaid (7)
- 35 Nothing in the roll gets the bird (7)
- 36 Unhappy about the crowd indeed (9)

DOWN

- 1 Commissioned and set in action (7)
- 2 One old gangster has alternative contrivance for her (7)
- 3 The bottles are broken in the valise (5)
- 4 Initial remedy to cure it, or make a new man of (7)
- 5 Pull up to fend off (4)
- 6 Went red? (4)
- 7 They're not the managers but they inform (7)
- 11 Had to be broken before stick (6)
- 12 Andante and lost bet (4)
- 15 Very little to see (4)
- 17 First lady! (3)
- 18 "That's a bargain" : but you could have been swindled (4)
- 19 Marked stolen (6)
- 21 I am made for a friend in Paris (3)
- 22 Light headed Alan gets flyer – just light (7)
- 23 Zone found in a real situation (4)
- 25 Arrives or pulls round (5,2)
- 26 Harris receives the key and worries (7)
- 27 Land and get translation involved (7)
- 30 Having subtracted nine from sixteen, go wrong and get nervous (5)
- 32 Cut growth limits because confined (4)
- 33 Could be a dry measure (4)

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News from St. Leonard's Lower School



WELCOME BACK

The Spring Term 2012 began on Wednesday 4th January. Miss Laura James has been appointed as our new Class 2 teacher and **is settling well into life at St Leonard's. On her first day she accompanied 102 children to the Pantomime in Northampton to see Aladdin - oh yes she did!**

NEW ARRIVAL

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15th January 2012

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Mondays 20 th February,	Reach Out
19 th March	Please join us for coffee
and 21 st May	and cake at 10.30 am
Mon 13 th - Fri 17 th February	Half Term
Tuesday 21 st February	Pancake Races 1.30 pm

View from the Vicarage

I can't believe that another year has passed and when you read this we will already be a month into 2012 I guess this letter just has to be about things new and resolutions but of course the new Church Year began over a month ago though as **I write it was only yesterday! There's something really good about new things –** that pristine, untouched, unblemished state. When I was a child I took pride in my handwriting and the appearance, if not the content, of my exercise books at school. I loved getting a new book and consciously did my very best writing on the first page. The reverse side of that page was never quite as good because it had the **imprint of the previous page's writing showing through but there was always the** new, untouched page, which followed it. It was never quite the same as that first page but nevertheless it gave the impetus for a fresh start and an opportunity to do **my best again. It's because of these memories and the pleasure still of writing in** note books that I love the phrase, 'turning over a new leaf' which is what new year's resolutions are all about. **When you turn over a new page the old page is out of sight, left behind. Forgiveness through Christ's death for us is what makes it** possible for us to turn over a new leaf and leave the past behind. Sometimes it is not quite as easy as turning the pages of a book, sometimes it is hard to leave behind the past and the failings and we need help. There are times when we need **someone who we can talk to who can reassure us of God's forgiveness in such a** way that enables us to move on. If you find the page difficult to turn I would commend to you sacramental confession which, while it may not be publicised, is available from any of the clergy in our team. It provides an opportunity to voice **those things we long to turn from and to hear God's word's of forgiveness spoken** out loud to us.

The phrase also brings to my mind the leaves of beautiful manuscripts where each new leaf reveals more and more treasures of exquisite calligraphy and marvellous illumination. Recently I was able to indulge my love of beautiful manuscripts when I **went to the exhibition 'Royal Manuscripts – The Genius of Illumination' at the** British Library. The exhibition is on until 13 March so I would encourage you to go though I warn you that one visit will not be enough because of the sheer quantity and exquisite beauty of exhibits to enjoy. You can turn the leaves of one of the **books, Henry VIII's Psalter, on line at: <http://www.bl.uk/royal>** but for the rest you will have to be content with the pages that the curators have chosen. Many of the beautiful treasures are bibles, gospels, psalters and books of hours (prayer books **for lay individuals' private devotions) which were made with the intention of giving glory to God though admittedly they did show off the owner's wealth too.**

Whenever we take the opportunity to turn over a new leaf in our lives may that next leaf be one that brings glory to God and may we always be illuminated with the light of his love for us and his world. Happy New Year!

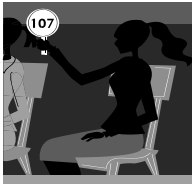
Jennie

HAPPENINGS!

Thursday 9th February
Coffee Morning in the Church Hall
10am-Noon



Saturday 18th February
Men's Big Breakfast
in the Church Hall at 8.30am



Saturday 10th March
50/50 Auction in the Church
Hall at 1pm (see advert on
page 9)

Saturday 21st April
60s Evening at the Church Hall
(see advert on page 20)

Saturday 19th May
May Fayre at the Church Hall
and surroundings. From 1pm



For more information on any of these events,
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St Leonard's Church, Heath & Reach

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weekly

Take time with others **each week** to meet, eat, pray and take action.

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- ◆ a short liturgy to pray together
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 - ◆ a reflection to think together
- and
- ◆ a challenge to act together



The Lent Challenge is a joint initiative between the Dioceses of St Albans and Belize. Enjoy pictures, reflections and recipes from Belize.

Transforming Life

The Diocese of St Albans Lent Course 2012

All the resources work alongside the St Albans Diocesan Lent Course, *Transforming Life* **. Use them together or separately.

* Sign up and find more information at www.livethechallenge.co.uk.

(If you have registered for the Challenge in the past you do not need to sign up again; you will receive the emails, unless you have chosen to unsubscribe.)

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The Villager

That's it, the excitement of Christmas has come and gone, the bank balance is hovering in the red and the New Year's resolutions are all forgotten. But may I wish you a Happy New Year and all the fun of the Olympics and the Queens' Jubilee celebrations.

I was amazed to find a St Leonard's church magazine this week, dated September 1987, and to note that 'Villager' was writing in it. Can I celebrate a Silver Jubilee of articles this month? The magazine in those days was titled 'Encounter' and 'young' Revd. Grant Fellows had survived a year in the parish. Like today, the PCC was deliberating on 'A Vision for the Parish' which set out objectives for the coming three years. The congregation were asked to Read it, Think upon it, Pray about it, Keep it and Act upon it.

As a matter of interest, there were 32 individuals or families using the weekly envelope scheme and 14 others giving on a monthly or weekly basis, with 29 covenanting their offerings, which resulted in a cheque from the Inland Revenue for £975.81.

Social events raised money for the church; the Waldocks entertained 35 people in their garden 'enjoying a rare touch of sun with good food and wine' and £45 was given to St Leonard's.

In September, the lunchtime barbecue was at the home of Sid and Maggie Pratt-Heaton and in October the Harvest

Supper was on Friday the 9th. On the 11th, the Parish Ramble was after the 10.30 am service and the Barn Dance on the 31st. The Christmas Bazaar on November 21st ended the **year's fundraising activities.**

'The Villager' wrote on the events of 1913 and what exciting things villagers could or had done.

It was possible to bid for convenient lots of 6 acres of **underwood in King's Wood or a field of pasture known as the Allotment Field in Shenley Hill Road.** Also two acres of **'Lockley's', occupied by Mr J D Britten were also for sale.** But perhaps you would rather buy three brick and stud built and tiles cottages in Woburn Road, occupied by Messrs. Roberts, Perry, Creamer and Croxford?

But the most exciting event was the football match between the village and Linslade. No love lost here, one could say! Owing to the rough play, the referee decided, about half an hour before the end, to stop the game. Earlier on, players on both sides lost their tempers and fouls were frequent. A Heath player was struck and blows followed and even after warnings, the players became so threatening that the match was brought to an end with Linslade leading 3-1. Red cards for all, these days!

Have a good 2012, and remember as William Ward wrote in **the September 1987 magazine: "The more we count the blessings we have, the less we crave for the luxuries we haven't"**

Geoff White



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Rota Reminders

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12th February	TBA	A Timms
19th February	F & J Richards	A Timms
26th February	J Oxley	Lent—no flowers
4th March	J & T Mellodey	Lent—no flowers
11th March	J & A Russell	Lent—no flowers
18th March Mothering Sunday	A Chapman & J Thomas	Lent—no flowers
25th March	M Lutt & M Cliffe	Lent—no flowers

CALLING ALL RETIRED MEN!



St Leonard's Old Boys (otherwise known as the SLOBs) are a group of retired gentlemen who meet once a month to help keep the church and hall surrounds tidy

We meet on the first Monday of each month and tackle whatever light work is needed at that time followed by a "planning lunch" at the Axe & Compass.

There is no commitment to come every month but only as and when you can and only for two hours.

We meet at the church hall at 10.00am. The next meeting is on **Monday 6th February**

And Finally.....

This month's gardening tip

When weeding, the best way to ensure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.