

Open Space

SAINT STEPHENS SOUNDWELL

JANUARY 2010



A wonderful adventure

SO HERE WE GO, into 2010 with a whole new year of possibilities before us. What will the year hold for St. Stephen's? I don't know!

We may know some things, but we cannot know it all and that is probably just as well.

I can say a few things we know as we step into the New Year together.

We know, for example, that God loves us and holds us in his care – no matter what.

We know that the more we give of our lives and our hearts to the Lord, the more He gives back to us.

The more we trust God, the more He proves himself trustworthy.

It is as simple and knowable as that.

Throughout the Scriptures God is the one called 'YHWH' (Hebrew for 'I am what I am' or 'I will be what I will be'). He is the 'Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end', the one "who was, and is, and is to come".

Yet *at the same time* God is the one who gives streams in desert places, who breathes new life in to dry and lifeless bones, and who puts a new song on our lips. He is the one who says: 'Behold I make all things new'!

I have a theological book called '*The courage to doubt*', written by a professor of Old Testament studies.

His studies show that throughout Scriptures God again and again calls

His people to a new understanding and relationship. Often it was hard to grasp at first.

Moses had to learn to speak with God in the storm on Mount Sinai.

Elijah had to learn to listen to God in the 'still small voice' after the storm.

David learned that the Lord would have a temple to his name in Jerusalem.

Jeremiah had to learn that God was not limited to the Temple or Jerusalem, and would see them destroyed to bring a remnant of his people back to faith.

Jesus' first disciples had to learn that God is to be found more often among the poor, the marginal and the dispossessed than in palaces. Each of these has been a painful lesson to learn, but the rewards for learning them have always been the beginnings of wonderful new adventures of faith.

Jesus came into our world that first Christmas and scandalised many by claiming to be God. His life and teachings show us that God is always ready to do new and wonderful things for love of our human race. Jesus set people free from the oppressive traditions of the past and released them into the 'glorious liberty of the children of God'. People could be so free in his presence that even the prodigals, the failures, the poor and the marginal loved being with him. He refused to judge where others rushed to judgment.

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Mission Partners with St Stephens:

Bristol City Centre Soup Run
Bristol/Uganda Link
Christian aid
Emmaus
Fair Trade
Frenchay Hospital Chaplaincy
Volunteers
Soundwell Community Trust
Stop the Traffik
International Justice Mission
We will hear more of these partners in future issues of Open Space

Open Space is usually published on the first Sunday of the month..

If you would like to publish something then please give it to:
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or send an email to
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to arrive mid month preceding.

Thank You.

This IS Church – but not as you know it



The real climate change

A contemporary letter from Bishop Mike

ONE of the things that's hotting up in our culture is the climate change debate.

There appears to be wide support for the science on climate change, whilst also a voluble minority who regard the whole thing as some kind of over-exaggerated conspiracy. Participating in the recent WAVE bike ride focused this for me.

Personally, just to be clear, I do buy the science, *but even if I didn't*, it is clear to me if, as Christians, we are about justice for all people, it is increasingly important for us to work out how we might live together on the planet to achieve that ideal. Pressure on the world's food supplies, water availability and natural resources surely place a responsibility on us all '*to live more simply in order that others might simply live*'.

The current recession seems to flag up the fear amongst politicians about the political costs of facing the future realistically. As I have said on

many occasions, most political solutions to get us out of recession seem to focus on re-creating the climatic conditions that got us into this mess in the first place.



Economies that rely on huge levels of consumption fuelled by high levels of personal debt are very likely unsustainable.

The Bible places a responsibility on us to responsibly look after the whole earth (Genesis 1), not just our bit of it.

Justice for all will not come about if the G20 nations rule the world for their own benefit and not with responsibility for all people.

Should the Church take a lead in all this?
I believe we should.



Is it possible to believe that we might not just talk about a different way of living on the planet which will benefit all human flourishing, but that as a community we might truly begin to live our lives differently? Is there such a life and what would it look like?

These are searching questions.

My guess is that a good many people are quite frankly defeated as to how to set about this.

I confess that it is confusing to be told today that something is good and sustainable practice, only to be told tomorrow that it's not.

This happens too many times and trying to motivate us by guilt really doesn't work.

I conclude that before we shall really begin to tackle global injustice, we need a change of climate in the way we think.

It's too easy to sit around blaming bankers and hedge fund managers for their out of control greed when my own desire to have yet more stuff is also out of control.

Only when we start to think straight will we start to ask straight.

I sometimes wonder whether we Christians look as though we have found a different way of living to the wider world or whether the reality of our situation is that people look at us and conclude that we live life exactly like everyone else with a bit of churchgoing thrown in!

Such a scenario would be both tragic and hopeless.

This much is clear to me. The world will not be saved by superficiality.

We have to put our faith to work, not just to maintain a culture or a building, but to make the world a bigger and better place for all human flourishing.

BISHOP MIKE

SEASONS GREETINGS
and
Best Wishes for the New Year

Looking back, looking forward

ARE you suffering from seasonal anti-climax blues, are you heavier from mince pies post Christmas?

I know I am. Come on own up to it!

As the New Year and its soon to be forgotten resolutions go by the board, we'll try and brighten up the shivering masses in Soundwell, as we face the future optimistically.

We'll have a little laugh here, as it is what's in store in the hallowed portals of St Stephens that matters!

You all will hear quite early on in January from Arthur, with his grim smile "May I put you down for Cadbury's in 2011? If you don't pay up, pronto, you'll never come again on my November trip to Torquay and I'll never speak to you again!"

Will Ken Fox be one of the welcomers and with icy cold mitts standing at the Church door with teeth rattling, and knees knocking?

And Alan Blackburn, "All the better for seeing YOU". Will Ian forget someone's name again? (only joking!).

Seriously though, how went 2009? Were there good times and less good times?

There were new babies baptized, marriages, and sadly funerals too, and we were delighted when a grandchild passed an exam, and the lovely lady with the new perm shyly says "Thanks" for the compliment about it.

We prayed to God about the situation in Afghanistan and it's environs, and nearer home, the poor, the homeless and the sick, mentally and physically and the stoicism of a neighbour and friends.

But the good news, dear people is that Jesus is first in everyone's great times and sad times, as we all offer our prayers to Him, our smiles and our tears, our ups and our downs,

When we sometimes find a gentle tear appears, and a hand squeezes your shoulder at a long forgotten hymn, recalling a sad time and when Lin played it so beautifully.

He was in the robin's sweet melody, perched on the rooftops, against the background of that well remembered September sunset. He was in the amazing silver and white stars, decorating our church at Christmas. And the hibernating hedgehog in Jackie's back garden. He is with us in everything, sad and happy. It's the legacy of all of us.

Lord, be with us at the going down of the sun and in the morning, and in the tender gentle rain, which makes our England so green and precious.

Our land, which is in Jesus' soft and gentle hands, and may it ever be so in 2010. Our sweet Saviour will be with us in sunshine and showers, as we face the future TOGETHER. God bless you all.

JACKIE SHEPPARD

Remembering how things change...

THIS is a continuation of last month's reminiscences on the past. Let's start with the weather.

When it snowed, everyone used to clear it from the path outside their home? And someone would throw some sand on the road in your street. And the council used to use snow ploughs, and a gritter lorry, working in convoy to keep the main roads clear.

And when they had finished, they went round again just to *keep* the roads clear.

In your street, there was only one or two cars, and everyone went along to look at them.

And the children played in the streets, before they invented strangers.

Then came mass production and cheap vehicles. Ford Populars and Morris Minors, Austin Cambridge, Morris Oxford.

Do you remember when we had only the 'A' roads? Before motorways? How did we manage before the Motorways!

Do you remember when trains used to run on time? Before the arrival of the wrong kind of snow on the line.

Have you managed to keep warm this winter? Do you remember roaring coal fires? Aga cookers? It was the time before central heating? Do you remember 'lino' in every room, especially the bedroom. So getting out of bed in the middle of the night meant putting your feet onto the cold floor? Maybe there was a rug, usually

only in the 'front room' the one you kept for visitors only, before wall to wall carpets were invented.

Do you remember looking out of the window on a cold morning. Condensation and ice on the metal frames and single glazing.

Thankfully our standard of living has improved since those days. That is to say, things have '*changed*'. Some changes have been better, some less so.

Hopefully we can face any changes ahead with a positive attitude.

So here's to all that's 'new' for the New Year and new decade of 2010.

DAVID PACKE

JANUARY CYCLE OF PRAYER

Wc 4th	NEW YEAR	Barbara & Bernard Denyer Martin Derrick, Margaret Dodge Helena Drinkwater, Margaret Dyer, Bob & Nancy Emery	Soundwell College St Mary's Redcliffe and Kingsfield Schools
Wc 11th	Baptism Preparation	Jon & Claire England Mike & Joan Faulkner, Julie Freeman, Ken Fox, Julie & Sean Fudge	The Grange School Downend School John Cabot Academy
Wc 18th	Week of Prayer for Christian Unity	Trudy & John Gainey, Gwyn Gillett, Brian & Patricia Grant Jakey, Lhina, Emily & Charlie Graupner, Sarah & Dave Gray	Mangotsfield School Speedwell School
Wc 25th	Marriage Preparation	David Greenland, Joyce Hacker Beryl Hall, John Harding Enid Harris, Geoff & Joyce Harris, Vanessa Harris, Roy & Ruby Harrison	Alexandra Close Alexandra Gardens Alexandra Place

JANUARY DIARY

03 Sunday (Epiphany)	08.00am 10.30am 03.30pm 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) All age Family Communion TEA SERVICE Common Worship Communion
06 Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Communion
09 Saturday	09.30am	DAD & ME (for dads and their children)
10 Sunday (Christ's Baptism)	08.00am 10.30am 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) Holy Communion Evening Prayer
13 Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Communion
17 Sunday (Epiphany 2)	08.00am 10.30am 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) All age Family Communion HEART Evening
20 Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Communion
24 Sunday (Epiphany 3)	08.00am 10.30am 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) All age Family Communion Evening Prayer
27 Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Communion
31 Sunday (Epiphany 4)	08.00am 10.30am 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) All age Family Communion Evening Prayer

FEBRUARY PREVIEW

03 Wednesday	10.15am	Holy Communion
07 Sunday (Epiphany 5)	08.00am 10.30am 06.30pm	Holy Communion (Prayer Book) All age Family Communion Evening Communion

FROM THE REGISTERS FOR DECEMBER

Baptisms

Leila Charlotte May Hartley,
Tamila Corrine Hartley
Archie Connor Luton
Sophie Anne Hughes

Weddings:

Daniel King and Emma Boughey

Marriage blessing:

Michael and Marilyn Reed

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He celebrated while others complained. He spoke openly and with authority while others plotted in dark corners. And he is still the same – always doing new things.

The hymn says: *'Change and decay in all around I see, O thou who changest not abide with me.'* Those are soothing words, but the fact is that Jesus has been an agent of change for the last two thousand years.

In this New Year, in this church, in this community, Jesus will be an agent of change in people's lives.

The more we dare to give of ourselves to Him the more he will give of himself to us. That is what I call a REFRESHING change.

Are you ready for this wonderful adventure to continue in 2010? I am!

IAN WILLS, VICAR

Open Space will be available 'on-line' each month. Just go to the church website and on the home page click on the link to a PDF document which will download for you to read and or print off as you wish. In colour too!

E&OE

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