

## Sunday Services

Evening services are at 6.30pm unless otherwise shown.

### December

- 2nd Brenda Gutberlet (S)  
(4pm) *Festival of Light* at Ashingdon
- 9th Pam Smith(  
Andy Thomas
- 16th Margaret Deans  
(4pm) **Carol Service**, Gordon Bates
- 23rd Jim McAvoy  
(4pm) **Christingle Service**, Brenda Gutberlet
- 30th Worship Leaders  
No evening service

### January

- 6th Len Ward  
Brenda Gutberlet (S)
- 13th **Family Day**  
No evening service
- 20th Brenda Gutberlet (**Annual Covenant Service**) (S)  
Sue Sigfrid
- 27th Members Own  
Rev Diane Smith

*There are several changes to the Circuit Plan - the ones above are correct at the time of printing. All services are subject to change at short notice - see your printed notices for up to date information each Sunday.*

## Dates for your diary:

### December

- 2 *Festival of Light* service at St Andrews Ashingdon, 4pm
- 5 Hockley Methodist Church open for viewing the decorated church
- 13 Delivery of Christmas goods to HARP
- 16 Carol Service, tea and card distribution, 4pm
- 23 Christingle Service (special for children), tea, 4pm

### January

- 13 Family Day, service, lunch and a film
- 20 Annual Covenant Service (11am)

### February

- 13 RDCF Lent Lectures start. All are at *Rockdene*, 3 Leicester Avenue, 8pm
- 20 Church Council Meeting, 8pm
- 20 Lent Lecture
- 27 Lent Lecture

### March

- 5 Lent Lecture
- 12 Lent Lecture
- 17 *Stations of the Cross*, St Teresa's, 8pm
- 20 Maundy Thursday service, 8pm

### June

- 14 Ho Ho Olympics, Rayleigh Methodist Church 2-4pm

The **Methodist Church** 



**Unto us a child is born.  
Unto us a Son is given**

*Brenda and the stewards wish you a peaceful Christmas and a prosperous New Year*

**Dec 2007 /  
Jan 2008**

The Newsletter of  
**Rochford Methodist Church**  
North Street  
Rochford  
SS4 1AB

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Thanks to John Sanders 12-20-2006  
PASTOR JONES COULD SENSE THE CLOSE PRESENCE OF CHRISTMAS AS HE SLOWLY MADE HIS WAY THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF POINSETTIAS

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Thanks to John Michael Sullivan (See Luke 2:1-16) 12-23-2005  
AT LEAST WE CAN SAY THAT HE WAS BROUGHT UP IN A STABLE HOME

# Editorial

I'm sorry about the tone of the last editorial, but I'm happy to say there was a positive response and I have been promised a flow (well, at least a trickle!) of new articles over the next few months.

One of these will be a series by Mel Cottey who has offered to interview members of the church about your life in the church. Mel is likely to do this largely by questionnaire, so if she asks you, please help her and respond quickly - even a church newsletter has deadlines! And please don't be upset if your interview doesn't appear immediately; the aim is to produce a balanced flow of articles so several people may be asked to participate at the same time.

Talking about deadlines, I have had a comment that would-be contributors don't know when the next edition is due out or when I need articles. All I can do is to point you at the left-hand box at the bottom of this page where there is all the information you need. This is the *first* part of the newsletter my proof-reader always looks at to make sure it is correct!

**Dave**

## Lucy Woods

We are sorry to have to record the death of Lucy who collapsed in North Street on her way to the morning service on Sunday 18th November. Several of her friends were with her at the time. She was taken to hospital and died just after 5pm the following day.

The funeral took place on Friday 30th November.

Our thoughts are with her daughter Heather, son in law Dave and the children Freya and Hayden.

The next planned publication date is 3rd February 2008. Articles, etc, should be with Dave by 20th January please.

I prefer articles by email, floppy disc or typed with a good DARK original (because, being lazy, I can handle these without re-typing them!), but I am happy to receive them in any form—so long as I get something from you!

Emails can be sent to me at either of the addresses shown in the box on the right.

The **Rochford Methodist** is published on behalf of Rochford Methodist Church. Opinions expressed in this newsletter may not be those of the Methodist Church.

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### Editor:

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## What goes on at Rochford Methodist Church?

### Sunday

11.00 am FJ Club  
11.00 am Morning Service  
6.30 pm Evening Service

### Monday

2.30 - 4.30 pm Women's Fellowship (Sept - May)  
7.15 - 8.45 pm *Blossom on the Oasis.*

### Tuesday

9.30 - 11.30 am *Happy Hands* Toddler Group  
12.00 - 2.00 pm *Happy Hands* Toddler Group  
3.00 - 7.30 pm Hildale School of Dancing  
8.00 pm Wesley Guild (Oct-Apr)

### Wednesday

7.00 - 10.00 pm Alcoholics Anonymous

### Thursday

9.30 - 11.30 *Music Dreams* (for 0-2 years)  
3.45 - 7.30 pm Hildale School of Dancing  
7.30 - 9.30 pm Table Tennis

### Friday

8.00 pm Rochford Floral Group (2nd Friday of month)

### Saturday

9.00 am - 3.15 pm Hildale School of Dancing

The premises are available for use outside the above times. Contact Margaret Rayner on 544252 for more information.

### And in addition . . .

Two open House Groups meet each month in a different place each time. One usually meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month and the other on the 3rd Wednesday. Look in the weekly notices for the dates and venues. A third House Group is for newer members of the Church and is by invitation only.

## Pilgrims' Way Review - Sunday, 7th October 2007

Further to my last article when I gave an outline of the recent Pilgrims' Way Annual Review meeting, Sonia has now pulled together all the comments put up on the walls during the lunch and this article is based upon those notes.

It was very encouraging to see a number of specific comments on the "Things that you like". These included people liking the different services, for example the All Age Worship Services, Family Days, Sing a New Song Services and those led by the Worship Leaders (thank you)! Other points made were about children doing the bible readings and taking part in the services and that old and young mix well when we have All Age Worship, go to the park, or share lunch and games. It was also felt that Pilgrims' Way has brought a greater sense of fellowship across the age groups. Specific mention was also made of the new board for Bible readings that Roy Pavitt so expertly made for the Church.

Of equal encouragement was the fact that there was very little raised that people haven't liked. One was that some services are too long (but we do request that All Age Services are no longer than 45 minutes – we have varying degrees of success with this!). The other point made was more of a comment really in that some of the Family Days have not been particularly well supported. One reason for this was thought to be that people needed more notice to ensure that they are free. With this in mind we have already booked them up for next year - 13 Jan, 16 March and 29 June (followed by a church picnic). **Please put these dates in your new diaries.**

Perhaps the biggest section was *New Things To Try* which was excellent – what a creative and deep thinking bunch you are! The comments were wide ranging and included: variety of musical instruments in a service; an Away Day/coach outing; *Songs of Praise* service, led by worship leaders; making better use of churches within the community by sharing important information; share a prayer once a month; a child-dominated service, with children doing bible readings, reading simple scripts and singing; support for new chaplaincy at Somerfield; put words up on screen occasionally (to make it easier to do actions to hymns), review the PA system. There was another suggestion that cakes should be included in the Pilgrims Way lunch!

The conclusions were that everyone unanimously agreed that Pilgrims Way had a very positive impact on the church, that had resulted in a good sense of fellowship, from which many good initiatives had evolved. Members were keen to continue along the Pilgrims Way path.

We are now pulling these together into Action Plans for this year (September 07 to August 08) that will be presented to the Church Council in February for endorsement. This is a work in progress but the sorts of things we are looking at is: to extend the Prayer Chain by encouraging new members to participate; to support the *Share and Prayer* initiative from Brenda; and having an independent review completed of the PA system. This is but a small sub section of the areas proposed, so watch this space!

Thank you to all of you who have supported Pilgrims' Way through your attendance and interest and through your prayers (which I firmly believe is *the* most important aspect of all).

**Mike**

## From our Minister

Dear friends,

There are so many ways in which we can communicate with one another today – phone, letter, e-mail and text to name but a few. Advent (the four weeks prior to Christmas) is a time when we pause and reflect that God communicated through the Prophets, the Bible, but supremely through His Son, Jesus Christ. Galatians 4:4 says,

“But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman.....”.

Years later when Philip asked, “Show us the Father (God) and that will be enough for us”, Jesus replied, “...anyone who has seen me, has seen the Father” [John 14:9].

This in turn reminds me of the nativity play I witnessed at Benfleet many years ago. The under fives showed us the Christmas story as admiring parents and grandparents watched. Two of the wise men entered and said, “I’ve brought the baby Jesus a present.” The third child was overcome by the occasion, and even though the teacher encouraged him, he declined to say his one line. Then suddenly he looked into the manger and shouted, “Oh, don’t he look like his dad”!

Of course, it was a humorous comment but that four year old had taught us what is at the heart of Christmas – God so loved the world that he gave us His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us [John 1:14]. Perfect communication between heaven and earth – love came down at Christmas – Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the new born King.

Whatever is in your plans for this Christmas time make sure you allow time to communicate with God and worship Him. O come let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

With love and prayers

*Rev. Brenda Gutberlet*

## Lay Worker Thoughts

Hello, it is Len the Lay Worker and his thoughts once again. It is so heart warming to know that Babs and myself have been in your prayers.

To bring you up to date let me assure you that Babs continues to grow in health, after being told by the hospital specialist that her body is completely normal, although personally I still do not know what normal means! Babs is now looking for part-time employment, it has to be part-time due to Babs stamina levels, her energy dissipates quite rapidly after a few hours.

Now that Babs and I have travelled through this experience it was somewhat annoying for me to be diagnosed with Prostate Cancer back in May. My treatment consists of a hormone injection every twelve weeks; this treatment will continue for three years, the situation will then be reviewed. At present I am fine although I do get tired.

Health issues affect us all, but the one thing I am convinced of is that it is the inner attitude of each individual that can make a difference. We have a choice as to be positive or negative, and what is chosen defines very much how we live. It is one thing to know and understand that God is with us in our situation, it is quite another to inquire of God what He would like us to learn in the midst of our experiences, thereby growing in faith because of our trust in God.

The author, Neva Coyle, in her book, 'A Woman of Strength', views problems and troubles as opportunities and choices, she outlines a useful exercise which is very helpful for the individual to come to terms with life issues.

Neva Coyle recommends that the individual needs to –

**Start Here** – With whatever your thoughts, attitudes, feelings and emotions are at the present time.

**Stop at Quiet Time Square** – Giving yourself space to be who you are. **Frequently**

**Pause at Prayer Lay-by** – Communication with God is paramount. **Acknowledge**

**that you are travelling down Discipline Drive** – God gave us The Ten Commandments, as a guide for Christian living.

**Remember that you have already been through Reclamation Road** – Jesus has redeemed us and claimed us as His own.

**Still travel through Problem Pass** – We need to travel through our problems to grow.

**Coming to terms with the Dessert Crossing** – The dry lonely areas of our lives.

**Passing by Death Valley** – Death touches us all, family and friends pass on, and only God knows when it is our turn to enter His presence. But to know God now, is to know peace within.

*(Continued on page 5)*

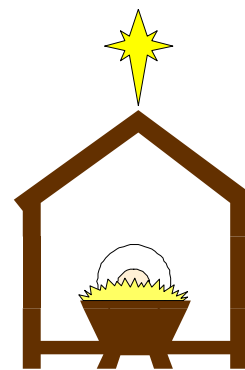
## Portrait of a Methodist

By JOHN WESLEY

Scrabbling through the drawers in the Vestry, I recently found the following:

" A Methodist is one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost given unto him. One who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. He rejoices evermore, prays without ceasing, and in everything gives thanks. His heart is full of love to all mankind and is purified from envy, wrath, malice, and every unkind affection. His one desire and the one design of his life is not to do his own will but the will of Him that sent him. He keeps all God's commandments from the least to the greatest. He follows not the customs of the world, for vice does not lose its nature through becoming fashionable. He fares not sumptuously every day. He cannot lay up treasures upon earth, nor can he adorn himself with gold and costly apparel. He cannot join in any diversion that has the least tendency to vice. He cannot speak evil of his neighbour any more than he can lie. He cannot utter unkind or evil words. He does good unto all men, unto neighbours, strangers, friends, and enemies. These are the principles and practices of our sect. These are the marks of a true Methodist. By these alone do Methodists desire to be distinguished from all other men."

So how well do we match up to John Wesley's ideal?



Excerpt from 'Star-Child' by Shirley Murray as published in *BBC Songs of Praise* hymn book.

Star-Child, earth-Child  
go-between of God,  
Love Child, Christ Child  
heaven's lightning rod,

*This year, this year,  
let the day arrive,  
when Christmas comes  
for everyone,  
everyone alive!*

Hope-for-peace Child,  
God's stupendous sign  
down-to-earth Child,  
star of stars that shine

## Design a Communion Rail Competition

Well, not so much a competition, but we want ideas from you about designs for a Communion Rail.

For those who weren't at our church before about 1995, we used to have a rail at the front of the Communion Area (or 'stage' as I've heard it called). Those who were able would kneel on the front edge of the raised area and put their arms on the rail to receive the bread and wine. The rail could then be used to lean on when standing up again. Those unable to kneel could use the rail as a support while they were standing.

One of the jobs delegated to me as a result of Pilgrims Way was to investigate firms who make Communion Rails and to get a price. Investigations have shown that *nobody* seems to make a standard product, so what we have to do is to design one ourselves and then get a price for it.

So this is where *you* come in. We don't want highly technical drawings, but we do need ideas for a rail about 20 feet (or 6½ metres) long that can be divided into three sections as the rail will be removed when there is no Communion service and shouldn't be too heavy to carry. It will not run the full width of the Communion Area as we will need to leave space for the minister to go down into the congregation at various point is the service, and for readers to get up to the lectern.

At its simplest, it will be several upright supports (of wood or metal) with a rail on top (like banisters on a staircase) and, at the back, a board with a row of holes drilled in it will be fitted so that the congregation can be put their glasses into it after they have drunk their wine. This board will save the person who distributes the wine from doing a rather awkward 'double-shuffle' during the service.

I have had some ideas myself, but I realise that I am not the best person for tasteful design (simple yes, tasteful no!). I have, however, spoken to a blacksmith I know who has experience of this sort of thing and he is willing to discuss a design and quote for any metalwork that may be needed.

There will be a closing date of Sunday 6th January, which will give you something to do over the quiet parts of Christmas to save you getting bored! All designs received will go before the property group who will decide which one(s) we get quotes for and present to the Church Council for a decision.

**Dave**



Every morning, lean your arm a while upon the window sill of heaven,  
then with the vision in your heart, turn strong to meet the day. Anon



## Our Friends (and Family) in the North \*

Bruce and I have just come back from visiting friends and family, and enjoying the beautiful scenery in the Lake District.

There had been no wind and the leaves were still on the trees. Because the lakes were so calm, the reflections in the water were really beautiful with an array of lovely colours. There was an added bonus - no traffic problems and the roads were really quiet.

The main reason we went away was for our grand-daughter's (Hannah Zena) Christening service. The church was full with family and friends as well as Andrew and Helen's university friends. The Christening was a true celebration - everyone stayed afterwards for a lovely buffet lunch in the church hall, and close friends and relatives carried food across the road to Andrew's house for tea in the afternoon. We all had a wonderful day.

During the week that followed we were so glad to be able to visit some old friends nearby, and relatives in Pontefract before coming home again - but there is no place like home.

**Carole**

\* with apologies to BBC2 for misusing their title

## RDCF Lent Lectures

Book the Lent Lectures in your diary now. They will be held at Rockdene on successive Wednesdays at 8pm from 13 February to 12 March. The theme will be *The Wounds of Christ* and it is hoped that each session will be led by a different person.

And don't forget the *Stations of the Cross* service at St Teresa's RC church on 17 March.

(Continued from page 4)

Neva Coyle concludes by saying, a woman of strength, is that individual who has given her heart fully to God and that that person knows themselves to be loved through the difficult places, through the deepest pain and through the most troubling of days.

Let me finish by quoting a scripture verse that Jesus spoke, - "Go your way; your faith has made you well." (Mark 10:52 NKJ)

God's blessings upon you all

**Len Ward**

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## Women's Fellowship

Joy Hardwick came along on 3 October to tell us about the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital and Dorothy Wells followed up with her 'Views from the Vicarage' the next week. A couple of devotional weeks followed with Joan Clarke and Pam Freeborn and we rounded up the month by packing our shoe boxes for the Samaritans Purse appeal.

Another couple of devotional weeks with Rev Ann Wilkes and our own Revd Brenda, and on 19th Digby Saunders strolled up the road from the charity shop to tell us about the St Mary's Horse Refuge.

And the month finished with a visit by Brian Gameson who led our session on 26th

Our planned programme for the next few weeks is:

December 3	To be arranged
10	Christmas lunch and entertainment
17	<i>Carol Service</i> with Revd Brenda
24	No meeting

A new programme will start in January so look out for the details.

We meet every Monday at 2.30pm at the Church and all ladies are welcome to come along.

The full programme can also be found on our church website at

[http://www.rochfordmethodist.org.uk/content.php?page\\_id=8](http://www.rochfordmethodist.org.uk/content.php?page_id=8)



December	1	Bruce & Carole Glendenning, George & Sue Edwards
	8	Mike & Heather Sims, Jan Willson, Sandra Hull
	15	BIG CLEAN (Ready for Christmas!)
	22	No cleaning this week
	29	Judy Garner, Rosie Isaacs, Maureen Whalley, Ivy Blenkinsop, Sheila Webber
January	5	Dave & Val Dobbin, Roy & Olive Pavitt, Gwenda Andrews
	12	Malcolm & Pat Rubidge, John & Marian Webb
	19	Colin & Margaret Rayner, Ron & Carol Castle
	26	Bruce & Carole Glendenning, George & Sue Edwards

## THE DANCE OF LIFE

I walk onto the dance floor which You call the path of life,  
I wonder how the dance will go but You say "It's alright!"  
I must not keep my eyes fixed looking at the ground  
but keep them focused up on high and what's going on around.  
If I kick other dancers and bring tears into their eyes,  
I must say I am sorry and sincerely apologise.

Sometimes I get the wrong foot and everything goes wrong  
but You hold me extra tight until I'm in time with the song.  
I look at other people as they glide across the floor  
They look so smooth and flowing that they make me insecure.  
But You say "Just keep dancing, you can only do your best  
Just let your spirit feel the beat and forget about the rest."

If a figure goes wrong and people just sit and stare  
I'm not bothered 'cos I'm with You and You love me and You care.  
And some people love to grumble on all what passes by,  
But I'm so happy dancing I just let my spirit fly.  
And they mock my humble efforts, but at least I'm on the dance floor  
And I'm getting slightly better than I used to be before!

When the dance floor's really buzzing and the people start to jive  
That is the very time when I really feel alive  
There's kicks and flicks and little tricks and when all is said and done  
This dancing thing can really be an awful lot of fun!  
But as the night draws to an end and the last song is slow  
I get that certain feeling it's nearly time for me to go.

Till eventually we dance again in Heaven in pure perfection  
and our dancing that was done on earth just seems a poor reflection.  
When we dance in eternity not one step is out of place  
and everything is safe and warm as we dance face to face.  
But you people who just sit there and think life is luck or chance,  
you must make Christ your partner and get on the floor and dance!

**Andy Thomas (June, July 2006)**

This is a poem Andy read to us in a service when he preached a few months ago. He had joined a dance club to learn to dance and noticed that his experiences on the dance floor had parallels with the Christian life. As a result he was moved to write the poem.

***Don't forget Come Dancing at the Wesley Guild on January 29th!***

## Amnesty International Southend Group

Every December for some years now the Southend Amnesty Group has organised a Greeting Card-writing evening, sending seasonal greetings and messages of hope all over the world to victims of human rights' violations and to defenders of human rights.



This year the card-writing evening will be held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> December at The Friends' Meeting House, Dundonald Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, starting at 7:30pm.

The Group uses AI's international campaign information and provides letter-writing guidelines background details about those to whom we write. Cards and envelopes are provided and the Group pays the postage, (though donations towards postage are welcomed).

Seasonal refreshments will be served!

Please lend this event your support – if you want further details or if you can't come but would like to help toward postage, please phone Mike Pregnall (01702 204748) or contact him at [mumic@pregnall.freemove.co.uk](mailto:mumic@pregnall.freemove.co.uk).

## Carols with a difference!

On 9th December at Leigh Wesley Methodist Church they will be holding a Traditional Carol Service, but not the ones the Victorians wrote and we sing so often. These are the *real* traditional carols, sung for the last 300 years or more.

The 30th Traditional Folk Carol Service will take place between 6:30 and 8 pm and will be followed by refreshments. Ken MacKinnon will be coming down from the wilds of Scotland (Black Isle) and music will be supplied by the Famous Potatoes.

Others taking part are the Chelmsford Folk Carollers, Peter Monk, John Coppins, Chrissie King, John Puddick, the Honeygales, Roy Brown, John & Sue Cubbin and John Smith.

Entry, of course, is free but there will be a collection in aid of famine and homeless charities as well as church funds.

## Book it now!

Next year the Olympics will be held in Beijing. Also next year the Ho Ho Olympics will be held at Rayleigh Methodist church for the benefit of Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford churches. It will be on 14th June from 2 to 4 pm and will be a family event with arena events such as welly-wanging and tossing the caber as well as competitions for children on the theme of *Summertime*. John Webb will be attending a meeting shortly to thrash out the finer details and he may be delegating one of the stalls to you.

So put it in your diary now - and add it to your New Year's resolutions as something you won't miss.

## Jean's story

As I am the longest serving member of the Women's Fellowship now I would like to tell you my story.

When Bert, Heather and I came to live in Rochford 27 years ago last May we visited Rochford Methodist Church one Sunday morning and were made so welcome we decided to make it our church and transferred our membership from our old church in Leyton.

As I didn't know anybody, I decided to try the Women's Fellowship and went along one Monday. There were about 12 members. At the first meeting I attended we had to wait for the pianist to arrive which she eventually did. She was a dear little old lady who hobbled in on two sticks. She could play the piano beautifully. Sadly, the next week she had a bad fall and passed away soon afterwards.

Our leader at the time asked if anyone could fill her place and play the piano. I had already made up my mind not to let anyone know I could play a little. I felt very guilty but kept quiet. Another elderly lady said she could play with *one* finger which she did for *one* week. The leader then asked me specifically if I could play so I had to own up. The following week I played very nervously but did my best and am still doing my best.

We now have a very different meeting each week with about 25 ladies attending. The meeting is run by Margaret, Carole and Gwenda admirably. Lucy sent out birthday cards and get well cards when necessary and Ivy marks the register. We have various interesting speakers, a lovely Christmas Party each year with a Christmas Lunch.

If there are any other ladies who would like to join us, please come along and I am sure you will wonder why you didn't come sooner.

By the way, we have a lovely cup of tea, a biscuit and a chat after each meeting.

The thing I find funniest of all is now I am that old lady who come hobbling in, not on two sticks but with my wheels.

## Jean Startup



A new list will start in March. See Beryl if you want to go on the next flower rota.

December	2	Margaret Rayner
	9	Wendy Wilson
	16	<b>Christmas Arrangement</b>
	23	Beryl Scoging
	30	Olive Pavitt
January	6	Helen Willson
	13	Margaret Stoll
	20	Carole Glendenning
	27	Ivy Blenkinsop

## Wesley Guild

Brenda led us into the new session on 2 October - and then Roy was 'instrumental' in leading us the following week with one of his puzzle evenings. After that we were introduced to the history and work of the Helen Rollason Cancer Charity. Ian Leadley showed us pictures of Thameside places as he took us down-river on a tour from Hampton Court to Woolwich. And October was completed when Gordon Bates took our Devotional evening.

November opened with our Guild Anniversary with Clifford Newman leading our Sunday morning service. A disappointingly low number of members were present for the tea and service in the afternoon, but the worship was good, led by Gwenda and members. Gillian Poland updated us with the work of *Crossroads* in Castle Point on the 6th and Bob Theobald told us more about the history of Glyndebourne opera.

We left the confines of the church on 22 November when we went to the SODS performance of *Singin' in the Rain* and they proved you *can* dance in the rain on stage (and slip over on the wet bits!). Back to the church on the 27th when Jane Fulford talked about the similarities and differences between teaching and preaching. And we rounded off the month by a visit to Rayleigh Guild for an evening of song, readings and poetry.

December marks the start of our carol singing and a change of time for a few weeks as we start our carol singing evenings. See below for details of the next couple of months. Unless otherwise shown our meetings are at 8pm on Tuesdays at the church and everyone is welcome to attend.

### December

- 4 (6pm) St Lukes, Carol singing
- 11 (7.30pm) Coachman Court, Carol singing
- 18 (7.30pm) Spa Court, Carol singing
- 25 No meeting

### January

- 1 No meeting
- 8 *Mercy Ships* with Sandy Burnett
- 15 *Southend Hospital Trust*
- 22 Rev John Ambrose
- 29 *Come Dancing*

## Christmas is coming!

I don't know! First of all, we've got to sort out who's coming for Christmas dinner, and what other meals they are going to need. Will Auntie Elsie want to stay over night and have we got to get the Z-bed out the garage? Will a 25lb turkey be OK or will we need to go for a 40lb one? Will Tesco have everything we need, or will I have to go to Iceland or Farmfoods for the traditional Christmas snacks of mini spring rolls and bhajis? Will there be *enough* food and drink?

And then there's the Christmas presents - Auntie Joan gave me an expensive present last year and I only gave her a cheap one so I've got to make it up to her this year. AND I forgot to send a card to Uncle Frank, so I've got to make sure I send him a *big* one to make it up to him this year.

With all the rush and hassle of preparing for Christmas we get so tangled up with family arrangements and sensitivities that we tend to forget the main reason for all this giving and celebration - that God gave us his son Jesus as the greatest present of all. And God wants the largest present we can give him - our selves, our time, our skills and our talents.

He *deserves* our worship and our thanks.

This year our services will be as follows:

- 16th December Carol Service at 4pm, led by Rev Gordon Bates
- 23rd December Christingle Service at 4pm, led by Revd Brenda
- 25th December Our Family Christmas morning service at 10.30am.

The services on 23rd and 25th are especially planned with children in mind and everyone, children and adults, are invited to bring their favourite presents along on Christmas morning. The services on the 16th and 23rd will be followed by light Christmas refreshments

Make sure you pick up one of our red leaflets this year, they give you more details of our services.

Christmas cards will be distributed on the 16th after the tea and proceeds from the cards will be given to NCH as usual. But this year there will be an alternative (should you wish to participate), as a suggestion has been made that we do what other churches do and display a large Christmas card on which you will be able to put your own message to the members of the church instead of sending individual cards. You can then make a contribution to NCH in lieu of cards and postage by putting it in the same dish.

Whether you use the large card because it is 'greener' (saving paper, envelopes, energy involved in the postal system, etc) or for any other reason, you still have the choice of sending cards instead (or as well).

And we must thank Paul Gibbenson for designing and producing the card.

