

The Quarterly Magazine

**St. Mary's,
Carden Place**

Christmas 2023



‘WORD OF THE YEAR 2023’

One of the oldest dictionaries, Merriam-Webster, has picked ‘Authentic’ as the word for 2023. According to data analysed by Merriam-Webster, ‘authentic’ saw a big uptick in searches this year and this has led the dictionary to name it the word of the year.

In our age of deepfakes, post-truths and AI, have we reached a crisis of authenticity? One of my favourite readings at Christmas is the verses from the Gospel of John, Chapter 1, that we often hear at our Carol Services. At verse 14, Jesus is described as the one who has ‘come from God, full of grace and truth’.

In recent months the World Health Organisation has launched an international commission on the problem of loneliness. It is led by the US Surgeon General, Dr Vivek Murthy, and the eleven-member board includes such people as the African Union youth envoy and the minister in charge of measures for loneliness and isolation in Japan.

The health risks of loneliness are as bad as smoking up to fifteen cigarettes a day, and even greater than those associated with obesity and physical inactivity, according to Murthy. In older adults, loneliness is associated with a 50% increased risk of developing dementia and raised levels of heart disease or stroke. But the lives of young people are also touched, with between 5% and 15% of adolescents being affected.

The WHO commission on social connection will run for three years. It comes after the Covid-19 pandemic halted social activity, increasing levels of loneliness, but also amid a new awareness of the importance of the issue.

Covid has disrupted the church-going patterns of many of us. Might I encourage us to return to worshipping together - it’s good for your health – and especially staying afterwards for a cup of tea and a blether.

Authentic. What a great word! As we seek to be authentic followers of Jesus, the one who came to us from God, may we be those that bridge the gap and reach out to others. What neighbour, friend or family member might we visit this Christmas?

Roger

BETHLEHEM – One star accommodation. Self catering only. Animals welcome. Cot provided.

Make room for Jesus this Christmas!

QUINQUENNIAL CONDITION SURVEY REPORTS

At our last Vestry Meeting on Tuesday 21st November, Dave Chouman, our architect, gave us a presentation based upon our latest Quinquennial Reports (2021-2026). Dave first of all reminded us that we had done a tremendous amount of repair work based upon the recommendations of our previous condition reports (2016-2021).

We then turned to the focus of the recommendations in the current reports and although we do not face such large amounts of repair work – as these have largely been dealt with during the final phase of the Major Repair and Refurbishment Project in 2022 – we do still have some significant pieces of work to attend to.

Refurbishment of church doors

This is a piece of work left over from the major repair and refurbishment project and involves maintenance of hinges and iron work on the main doors. This may require work offsite and temporary boarding of the doorway. We also plan to attend to security and safety issues relating to the Choir Vestry and rear doors. We did receive some financial support for this work from the Provincial Building Grant Fund in our funding of the major repair project.

Checking Rood Beam

With the drying out process continuing following the repair work undertaken in 2021 and 2022 our architect would like to check the condition of the timber rood beam. This will require a specialist piece of equipment in order to safely examine it.

Insurance Company requirements

Our insurers now require that we carry out various important surveys or assessments. These include an asbestos survey and management regime, a fire risk assessment and electrical testing. We completed the asbestos survey in October and the report indicates that we have some remedial works to carry out in the Choir Vestry roof area and in other places where electrical infrastructure exists. This was also pointed out when we completed the Electrical Testing. A Fire Risk Assessment has been arranged for early in the new year.

East End Garden Area

We have a number of problems in the east end area of the church grounds. In the later part of the autumn, we noticed that the crypt was very damp, and a drainage survey was conducted. The drainage survey indicates that some repairs are required for our 70-year-old external plumbing! We are also aware that the path between Carden Place and Albert Terrace is in a bad condition with lots of uneven pavers. With Dave Chouman's help we are working on a plan which would tackle the problems we face in this area. This would encompass tree work, tidying the east end border area, drain repair and relandscaping of the east end area. Fortunately, we have already been successful in receiving some funds for this work from Benefact and the Dr John Anderson Trust. Further fundraising will be required once we have a completed project plan to take to the strategic planning department at ACC.

Other areas for continuing repair and maintenance

The recent condition survey reports also indicate that some corrosion treatment on structural iron and steelwork is required in the storeroom areas. There will also be a requirement for further patch pointing of mortar to the external walls and attendance to slipped slates. We also will carry out winter maintenance of the gutting to clear out unwanted vegetation!

The Rectory

This month we are hoping, if the weather is fair, to fix some damage to the rear chimney area above the old washroom part of the building and to some cracking of the pointing on the rear of the Rectory roof. We have also just in the past few days noticed some leaking from the roof into the attic room area. Hopefully this new leak will be attended to whilst the builders are on site.



WAITING

How are you at waiting?

This is just one biblical answer to this question:

Galatians 4:4-5 (NIV) “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

Perhaps, like me, you’ve asked God why you are having to wait for an answer to your question(s), request(s) or development(s) you are seeking, such as that special event, that special job or even just to find solace and an end to whatever is troubling you.

Did you receive the answer(s) you were looking for and when you wanted, or are you still waiting? I’ve had more ‘no’ or ‘not now/yet’ than ‘yes’ to my petitions to God over the years. On reflection I am thankful that events didn’t turn out as I originally had hoped for or sought, either because God had something better planned, or these were not right for me, or it would have led me in the wrong direction, or I wasn’t ready at that point in time.

I love the Nativity Story and the emphasis on waiting for answers to prayers that unfold:

- John the Baptist was born to parents who had been waiting a very long time for a child.
- Mary and Joseph had to embark on a long journey before their son would be born and then find lodgings at the very last minute; Jesus wouldn’t be born in the house that Joseph was building for his wife and family, but in a stable.
- The three kings/wise men knew something of the star and tracked it for many years. They too had to embark on a long journey to discover the true meaning behind the star.
- The shepherds in the fields close to Bethlehem were considered, in the eyes of the world at the time, to be among the least in society. Perhaps they had been praying and waiting for change. After witnessing the angels proclaiming the birth of Jesus and extending to them an invitation to come and see the baby Jesus, they made their own journey to join in the celebration - with the arrival of God’s kingdom on Earth, everything was about to change.

They were all waiting for the same thing - for God’s perfect fulfilment of His promise. This possibly happened without them realising it. Yet because of their faith and obedience, each of these individuals will always be remembered for the part they played in the Nativity Story.

I am amazed at the number of people who were led to believe they were looking for a king or a man, not a child and definitely not a baby.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” 1 Peter 5:6 (NIV)

The Bible provides the answer to many questions and I believe offers a comfort within the waiting time. Nowhere in the Bible does it say to sit back and do nothing. I believe the Bible says to approach God in humility, develop a humble heart, pray from that heart and allow humility to help you discern God’s voice for ‘when the allotted time arrives’.

I wish to end with a prayer taken from Psalm 122:6 (KJV): "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: They shall prosper that love thee."

I pray for world peace, holding deep in my heart the promise that the prayers for the world will come to fruition. God has promised us that. As we know God keeps his promises.

Peace and Blessings to you all from

Margaret McKinnon

In the McKinnon household there are currently two 'waiting' events, each one involving excitement and anticipation:

1. Will the Amaryllis plant flower on Christmas Day?
2. Will my letter to Santa result in my receiving gifts? My Granddaughter, Georgia, has left an extra happy picture with the elf, in anticipation.



WHY THE FLOODS CAME

1 And the Lord spake unto Noah, saying, Where is the ark which I have commanded thee to build?

2 And Noah answered and said unto the Lord, Behold, I have had three carpenters off with Covid-like symptoms. The gopher wood supplier hath let me down; yea, even though the gopher wood hath been on order for nigh upon twelve months. The dampcourse specialist hath not turned up. What can I do, O Lord?

3 And the Lord said unto Noah, Thou shalt finish the ark even after seven days and seven nights.

4 And Noah said, It shall be so. And it was not so.

5 And the Lord spake again unto Noah, saying, What seemeth to be the trouble this time?

6 And Noah answered and said, Lord, my subcontractor hath gone bankrupt. The pitch which thou commandedst me to put on the outside and the inside is stuck in customs – it’s a Brexit thing. The plumber hath gone on strike.

7 And Noah rent his garments, and said, The glazier hath departed on holiday in Malaga, yea, even though I offered him double time. Shem, my son who helpeth me on the ark side of the business, hath formed an indie band with his brothers Ham and Japheth. Lord, I am undone.

8. And Noah said unto the Lord, The gopher wood is definitely in the warehouse. Yea, and the gopher wood supplier waiteth only upon his servant to find the invoices before he delivereth the gopher wood unto me, but his system is down.

9 And the anger of the Lord was kindled, and he said, What about the animals? Of fowls after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort have I ordered to come unto thee. Where, for example, are the giraffes?

10 And Noah said, Lord, they are expected today.

11 And the Lord said, And where are the monkeys and the bears and the hippopotami, two of each kind?

12 And Noah said, The van cometh on Friday; yea, it shall be so. They foretold it in a text.

13 And the Lord said, How about the unicorns?

14 And Noah wrung his hands and wept, saying, Lord, Lord, they are a discontinued line. Thou canst not get unicorns for love or money.

15 And the Lord said, Where are the elephants and the zebras and the hartebeests, two of each kind? And Noah answered, Nay, they have been delivered to the wrong address and they have gone back to the depot.

16 Noah kissed the earth, and said, Lord, Lord, thou knowest in thy wisdom what it is like with delivery dates.

17 And the Lord in his wisdom said, Noah, my son, I know. Wherefore dost thou think that I have caused a flood to descend upon the earth?

(Reprinted from the parish magazine of All Saints’ Church, Worlingham, alt.)

2024: INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CAMELIDS

Seeking inspiration for a magazine article last month, I thought I might look up to find out of what 2024 is the International Year. After all, something like The Child, or The Oceans, or Faith, might make a good article for a church magazine. Then I discovered that the United Nations has decreed that 2024 is the International Year of Camelids.

Camelid is a biological family that covers alpacas, vicuñas, guanacos, llamas, and camels, both Bactrian and dromedary. While alpacas and vicuñas have a fairly good press, the others, at least in this country, have more of a reputation for spitting and smelling, and generally regarding humans as a bit beneath them. They are not thought of as beautiful, or indeed in much need of having an International Year all to themselves.

Why do they? Here’s what the U.N. says:

*Camelids play an important role in advancing the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** related to the fight against hunger, the eradication of extreme poverty, the empowerment of women and the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems. From providing milk, meat and fibre for communities to transport for products and people, and organic fertilizer, camelids thrive where other livestock species cannot survive.*

Camelids play a key role in the culture, economy, food security and livelihoods of communities in Andean highlands and in the arid and semi-arid lands in Africa and Asia, including Indigenous Peoples. Even in extreme climatic conditions they continue to produce fibre and nutritious food. Indeed, the International Year of Camelids presents a unique opportunity to raise awareness of the role of camelids in building resilience to climate change – particularly in mountains and arid and semi-arid lands.

The International Year of Camelids 2024 aims to build awareness of the untapped potential of camelids and to call for increased investment in the camelid sector, advocating for greater research, capacity development and the use of innovative practices and technologies.



Camels edge their way into our Christmas story, or at least into Epiphany, by being associated with the Magi, the Three Wise Men or Kings coming from the East. The earliest image of the Magi is on a mid 3rd century fresco in the Catacomb of Priscilla in Rome, but the three shadowy figures are on foot, tiptoeing towards Mary and the baby as if afraid of waking Him. The earliest camels, lurking behind the Magi, appear the following century on a sarcophagus now held in the Vatican – in fact, all the images of the Magi in early times seem to be on funerary items, but then most Christian art was funerary at that time. Then camels fade out of fashion, and in the 12th century St. Alban's Psalter the Kings are shown on three fetching Arab steeds – blue, orange and pink. After all, European royalty did not ride on funny, lumpy beasts from the desert, even if elegant racing camels were all the rage amongst desert rulers.

The equine tradition carries on through the Renaissance, and may, indeed, be more accurate: an American priest and writer, Dwight Longenecker, asserts that though camels had long been domesticated and used as beasts of burden in Arabia, the development of those elegant Arab horses had led to them being used by more stylish riders by the time of Jesus' birth. That, perhaps, begs the question – were the Magi really kings, or were they just poor academics on a long, slow and uncomfortable journey to sort out the matter of that star?

Perhaps it is to Victorian artists that we owe the modern idea of three richly-dressed and ethnically mixed monarchs on camelback. Orientalism maybe takes some of the blame, identifying the Magi as foreign, mysterious, skilled in the ways of astronomy, bearing exotic gifts, a nice contrast to those homely shepherds. The camels are all just part of the image, and part, now, of the stock iconography of Christmas as much as Santa and his reindeer.

T.S. Eliot's poem, *Journey of the Magi*, gives us a wonderful first-person account of the difficulties of that long ride – nothing like that was undertaken lightly in those days, and yet they were driven on, despite discomforts, dangers, 'the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory, Lying down in melted snow', driven to see what it was that star told them had happened. It was not enough for them to sit in their observatories, nodding wisely and making notes. They had to come, and to mark their visit with gifts whose meaning perhaps they did not even understand.

So whatever the wise men travelled in or on, whether you're travelling or not this Christmas and New Year and Epiphany, whether you're considering increasing your investment in the camelid sector (and I know I'd like a couple of alpacas in the garden), give a thought to the Magi, and their journey. Not just a silhouetted trek across a Christmas card's starry sky, but an epic pilgrimage to the infant Christ.



SOCIAL EVENTS

If you're looking at the printed version of this magazine, it's recommended you go to the website to appreciate the vibrant colours of the decorations here for our Mexican evening! It brought some sunny warmth to a cold November evening. Thanks to Marin for the photographs.



BOOK REVIEW



Joy Margetts, *The Healing*: A soldier, wounded in a battle he had no intention of surviving, finds himself recovering in a monastery. There are so many unanswered questions at the beginning of this book you have to read on, and if the soldier himself is grumpy, you do want to know why, and the monks are lovely, good-humoured and clever. This is an overtly Christian book with Bible passages included – if I have a gripe it is that they are from a translation I don't much like, but otherwise it's a very well-written, beautifully researched, and well-plotted book, and makes the reader eager to read the next in the – not sure it's a series, as such, but the family of books.

If you have read an interesting book and would like to tell us about it, please contact the editor.

ANGELS

by Jan Dean

We are made from light.
Called into being we burn
Brighter than the silver white
Of hot magnesium.
More sudden than yellow phosphorous.
We are the fire of heaven;
Blue flames and golden ether.

We are from stars.
Spinning beyond the farthest galaxy
In an instant gathered to this point
We shine, speak our messages and go,
Back to the brilliance.
We are not separate, not individual,
We are what we are made of. Only
Shaped sometimes into tall-winged
warriors,
Our faces solemn as swords,
Our voices joy.

The skies are cold;
Suns do not warm us;
Fire does not burn itself.
Only once we touched you
And felt a human heat.
Once, in the brightness of the frost,
Above the hills, in glittering starlight,
Once, we sang.

ACCOUNTS

August 2023

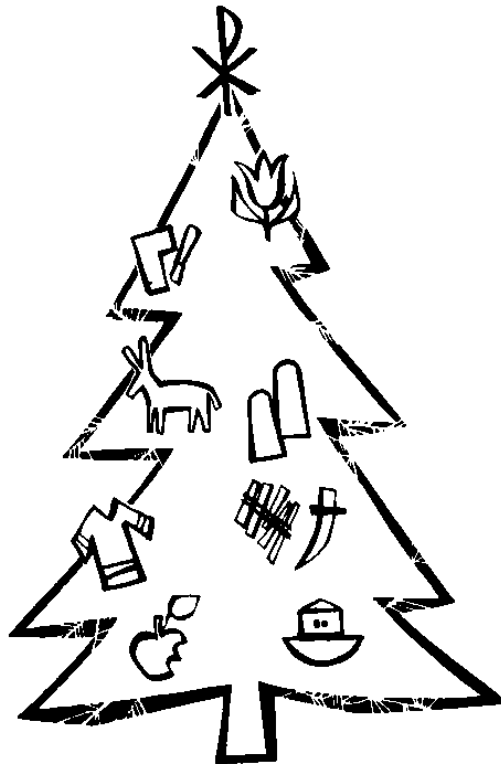
Income:	5,438
Expenditure:	<u>4,018</u>
Net result for month:	1,420

September 2023

Income:	4,087
Expenditure:	<u>2,369</u>
Net result for month:	1,718

Balance unrestricted funds:	37,596
Balance restricted funds:	6,872
Balance at month end:	£44,468

A very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



CHURCH DIRECTORY

Rector: vacancy

Assistant Priests: Rev. Jason Hobbs, Rev. Roger Dyer (for pastoral matters please contact on 07719 458571 or revrogdyer@btinternet.com)

Rector's Warden: John Cooke

People's Warden: Iain Stewart

Vestry Secretary: David Rose (acting)

Vestry Treasurer: Lydia Ross

Lay Representative: Nicola Mills

Sacristan: Anne Farquhar

Organist: vacancy

Protection of Vulnerable Groups Co-ordinator: Graham Thomson

Flower Convener: (please contact Nicola Mills for now)

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The deadline for the next magazine, our Easter 2024 issue, will be 25th March. Copy when required to Nicola Mills, or telephone 01224 488700, or e-mail to palaeography@aol.com. Thank you!

Your Magazine

You can order your St. Mary's News to be sent to you each quarter by e-mail, or ask for a Large Print version, or ask for any back copies of editions you may have missed. Just contact the Editor!

St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Carden Place, is a charity (Scottish Charity No. SCO 14062).