

# Christ Church Information Candlemas 2003

**Revd Celia Thomson,  
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***Dear Friends,***

**T**he time seems to have gone so fast since I announced that I would be leaving you all in February. I am very sad to be leaving Christ Church and I thank you for all that we have done together over the last few years.

*I hope that the next few months will be a creative time for the parish as you await the appointment of a new priest. You will have the opportunity to hear many different people preaching and leading worship in the weeks ahead and that can only be a positive experience. The worship will continue exactly as usual except that there will be no service of Holy Communion on Thursday mornings.*

*The church wardens, Jenny Tomlinson and Sue Rocksborough Smith, will have a heavy responsibility to bear, but they are both very dedicated to serving the parish and I know that you will all support them in any way you can.*

*My new address, from 20th February, will be:*

*3 Miller's Green,  
Gloucester  
GL1 2BN  
01452 415824.*

*I look forward to seeing some of you on 15th March at my installation service in Gloucester Cathedral. Please keep me in your prayers, as I will keep you in mine.*

*God Bless You All*

***Celia Thomson***

**PEACE  
TO  
YOU.**

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# Thought for the Season

## Candlemas 2002

### Concerning Cats and Saints

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I've always been grateful to visitors to the vicarage for putting up with the behaviour of Polycarp, my delinquent cat, whose sins have included stealing the very food off people's plates, putting nose and paws in the milk/cream jug at any opportunity, hogging the best chair in the room, dropping a live mouse into the midst of a crowded meeting, telling people when it was time to go home and generally believing that he owned the place – definitely not a saint. Yet named after one of the saints and martyrs of the early church, Polycarp of Smyrna.

His name has been an evangelistic tool, for if anyone asked about it I told him or her the story of Polycarp. Born in c. AD 69, Polycarp was one of the most important people of the early church after the time of the apostles. His pupil, Irenaeus, tells us that as a boy Polycarp was "taught by the apostles and met many people who had seen Christ."

Early records suggest that he met the apostle John and learnt about the faith from him. Some even claim that it was John who appointed Polycarp to be

bishop of Smyrna, on the coast of modern Turkey, not far from Ephesus. He remained as a bishop for 50 years until his arrest and martyrdom in 155 AD. At his trial when the Roman Governor was trying to make him renounce Christ and worship the Emperor, Polycarp replied: "Eighty-six years I have served Christ, and he has never done me any wrong. How can I then blaspheme my king and my Saviour?"

He was burnt at the stake and met his death with courage and dignity. The church at Smyrna later circulated an account of his end which is the earliest genuine record of a Christian martyrdom after the period of the Acts of the Apostles. The Church commemorates Polycarp on 23rd February.

Please spare us a thought that day!

**Celia Thomson.**



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# *From the church wardens*

As we prepare to say goodbye to Celia later this month, it seems that this is the moment to look forward to the future at Christ Church.

We want to thank Celia for all that she has given to the parish in her seven years with us, in her leading of our worship, her pastoral care and the deeper sense of community she has promoted through study groups and parish activities. All these aspects of her ministry will need to continue and develop as we go forward into an interregnum.

We do not know how long we shall be without a vicar, but it will probably be about a year. Meanwhile the usual pattern of services will be maintained, apart from Thursday morning Holy Communion. We shall be welcoming a variety of visiting priests with many different styles and we would urge everyone not to be timorous but to maintain (or even increase!) their attendance on Sundays to experience and enjoy this diversity. Please also give as much support as you can to study groups and other parish activities so that we can continue to grow together as part of the Body of Christ.

Naturally we will begin with feelings of loss and uncertainty, but if we all hold together, this can be a time of development and opportunity for us all. We will do our best to carry on the work of the parish and we ask you all for your support and prayers.

As we send Celia on her way to Gloucester Cathedral with our love and prayers, let us resolve, with God's grace, to continue our witness to Christ here in West Wimbledon.



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# ASH WEDNESDAY - 5th March

11.00 am Holy Communion at Christ Church

8.00 pm Sung Eucharist at St Matthew's

There will be no service of Holy Communion on Tuesday 4th March.

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## H O L Y   W E E K   2 0 0 3

### ***Palm Sunday 13 April***

10.00 am *Procession of Palms and Eucharist*

11.15 am *Coffee and Hot Cross Buns*

12 noon *The Passion Story for our Children*



### ***Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday in Holy Week***

8.00 pm *Night Prayer with Address*  
Led by members of Christ Church



### ***Maunday Thursday***

8.00 pm *Sung Eucharist with the stripping of the altars*

The Revd Gerard Bonham-Carter

### ***Good Friday***

10.30 am *Act of Witness*  
Churches Together in West  
Wimbledon

12 noon *Two Hour Reflection*  
Canon Ian Ainsworth-Smith  
Chaplain, St George's Hospital  
2.00 pm *Liturgy of the Passion of Our Lord*



### ***Easter Sunday***

8.00 am *Holy Communion*  
Canon Ian Ainsworth-Smith

10.00 am *Sung Eucharist*

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# Junior Church

Welcome back after the festive break. The dates for this term are :

## **Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>** Candlemas

All Age Worship everyone is in church

## **Feb 9<sup>th</sup>** Junior Church in the hall

**Feb 16<sup>th</sup>** There will be no Junior Church in the hall as this is Celia's last service. There will however be colouring available at the back of the church. This service is followed by a farewell lunch to which you are all invited but please contact myself or the church wardens as there is no cost but numbers of those coming are required.

## **Feb 23<sup>d</sup>** Junior Church in the hall

## **Mar 2<sup>nd</sup>** Junior Church in the hall

## **Mar 9<sup>th</sup>** Junior Church in the hall **Apr 27<sup>th</sup>** Junior Church back

We worship, play, make things, share juice and biscuits on a weekly basis.

Occasionally we dig or plant in our allocated flower bed.

So don't be afraid come and join us, all queries to Louise Roberts telephone no. 020 887 90971

## **Mar 16<sup>th</sup>** Junior Church in the hall

## **Mar 23<sup>rd</sup>** Junior Church in the hall

## **Mar 30<sup>th</sup>** Mothering Sunday All Age Worship in the Church

## **Apr 6<sup>th</sup>** Easter hols

## **Apr 13<sup>th</sup>** Palm Sunday Chose any of the following:

- Meet in the church hall for Palm Sunday procession at 10.00 am
- Coffee juice and hot cross buns at 11am
- Followed by The Passion Story for Children talk at 12.00 am

## **Apr 20<sup>th</sup>** Easter Day All in church colouring table at the back of the church. Easter egg hunt after the service.

### The Church exists for and by mission

The New Testament church knew that it had been created for mission. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, a praying, worshipful, obedient community of believers was sent out into the world to carry — and teach — the secret of God's kingdom throughout the world: to challenge and subvert the world's values and to convert its people; to bring the good news of God's kingdom and his justice to every community and nation. The task was not straightforward. They were told that they must not despair when progress seemed slow; they must not cease to act when difficulties loom, nor be deterred by opposition, however fierce. Above all they were to help one another in the task.

### The Church is a family created by God for his purpose

The early church, the *ekklesia* for gathering of the followers of Jesus, was a multilingual, multi-ethnic association scattered across the Roman Empire, whose members understood that they had been charged with carrying the gospel to all peoples (for example, Matt 28:18,19 and Acts 2:5-11). No part of this world-wide fellowship was entirely self-sufficient: Christian communities helped each other as need arose. They prayed for one another — and they encouraged and challenged each other with news of difficulties or successes in other places (for example Acts 2:44,45; Acts 14:26, 27; and Phil 4:15, 16).



Christians have not always been good at such 'receiving', but the church is far more than a collection of individuals. In his vivid image of the *ekklesia* as the body of Christ, St Paul reminded the believers in Rome and Corinth just how much they needed each other. They were not self-sufficient and were not meant to be so. 'The eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you.' (Rom 12:3-8 and 1Cor 12)

### We need insights from other cultures

In recent years Lesslie Newbigin and others have helped us appreciate how our understanding of the gospel is influenced by where we live. We are what our culture had made us: our Christianity is part of our culture. *"We read the Bible in our own language and it is full of resonances which arise from past cultural experiences."* (Newbigin).

How then can 'the veil be taken from our eyes?' Lesslie Newbigin suggests that we face the problem posed by the critic who said that we cannot pretend to move a bus while sitting in it: the answer has to come from outside. He explains, *"The only way in which the gospel can challenge our culturally conditioned interpretations of it is through the witness of those who read the Bible with minds shaped by other cultures. We have to listen to others."*

This is exciting, because it means that the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth. Some people have already found that by discovering themselves to be part of a world-wide Catholic Church, God can reveal insights about himself through other people to which they have hitherto been

blind. And it works both ways: we all need to learn the lessons which God wants to teach us.

### We need to encourage one another

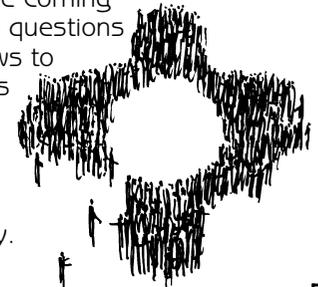
St Paul constantly encouraged the churches he visited with the example of how Christians in other places were responding to the gospel (for example Acts 20:1 8ff). Hearing what is happening in other places can bring hope, encouragement, enthusiasm, and a vision of new possibilities in a situation where people have ceased to expect change and growth.

### We are accountable to one another

Christians are charged to be ready to give an account of the hope that is in them. At times, therefore, it is our responsibility to challenge each other about our part in God's mission (Eph 4:15). Moreover, our fellow Christians in other countries and cultures sometimes see us far more clearly than we see ourselves.

After a recent visit to the English Midlands, a priest from Asia commented, "Christians in Britain — lay and clergy alike — seem depressed and discouraged. You brought the gospel to us, yet you don't seem to believe in God's power to change things any more. Perhaps you are too busy mending the church roof."

Normally it is only someone coming from outside who asks the questions about what 'everyone knows to be true', and so enables us to 'stand outside the problem', see ourselves more clearly and question the underlying values and assumptions of our society.



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# CHRIST CHURCH COMMENT COLUMN

Christ Church Information "Comment Column" is intended to focus on a topical issue in the light of the Gospel and Christian theology.

The views expressed are personal and those of the writer.

Who else would like to have a go - come on, here is your soap box!

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## ***Revelation or Reason ?***

During last year there was a hullabaloo in the media about a Christian state school in Newcastle that wanted to teach alternative views, including creationism, alongside evolutionism. The liberal media were aghast at this threat to the evolutionary/atheist belief system that they regarded as fundamental to modern life.

Within this debate was another issue that did not get aired - revelation or reason. The Church of England has always prided itself on trying to follow a course of compromise between *revelation* (scripture), *reason* (natural theology), and *tradition* (doctrine/church history). In this debate about evolutionism/creationism it was reason alone which seemed to major in the media. Much of the thinking behind this debate centred on the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's assertion (ably supported by the Anglican, John Locke) that religion was tolerable *within the bounds of reason alone*. But reason, like humanity, is flawed, broken and fallen and will not give us a complete picture of life, the universe and everything. Kant's belief system allowed for a god, but Jesus was just an ordinary human - a good moral teacher. Unfortunately one can trace a line from Kant to another German philosopher, Hegel; and from Hegel through the 'religious atheism' of Feuerbach and Nietzsche into the National Socialism of the Nazis (remembering that under the *blood and soil* religion of the Nazis, German school children prayed not *for* Hitler but *to* Hitler) also a line can be traced from Hegel through Marx into communism and Stalinism. Such is the nightmare of *reason* - humanity trying to solve the problem of life without *revelation*, without God.

Revelation is not primarily about personal inspiration or religious experience - this is not to decry the importance of being open to the influence of the Holy Spirit - but revelation (in terms of Christian doctrine) is about the transcendent, other-worldly God communicating to us about *Himself* and *His* loving purposes for the world and humanity (the emphasis on the male pronoun does not make God male - but when we pray "*Our Father...*" this is not the same as saying "*Our Mother...*"; to use the female pronoun would change what we understand about God's transcendence, and how Jesus Christ intentionally compared God's transcendence to the nature of fatherhood in the

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Jewish people of the first century). Let us see what one Christian church says about revelation and God on its website:

**God's Love :** *We believe that in spite of all the suffering in the world God made the universe and loves everybody in it.*

**God's Son :** *We believe that unless God helps us none of us would know very much about God. That's why we believe he sent his Son Jesus into the world, so that we could not only know more about him but also know him personally. And that's why we stress the importance of not just believing in God but believing in Jesus.*

**The Bible :** *We believe that the Bible is a unique record of God's relationship with the world. Through its pages we learn especially about Jesus; because He is the revelation of God, the Bible is the authoritative book on God's purposes for the world.*

When talking about the Sunday morning service the following is said:

*"It is a priority of this service to provide Biblical preaching which relates Christian faith to everyday life."*

So where is *revelation* and *reason* in the creation/evolution debate? Evolutionism is a theory and relies as much on faith as religious belief does. The evidence for evolution may appear compelling but is not irrefutable - yes we can observe evolution/development within species today (the fast mutation of microbe life, virus and disease - the evolution of antibiotic resistant TB over the least forty years, for example) but there is still no irrefutable link in terms of fossils to complete the picture between species. The missing link is just that - missing! And the faith of scientists that they will find it is touching but misplaced.

What does revelation tell us? - that is, the Bible. First of all, and this might seem obvious, but the sun and moon, the stars and planets are presented as they are - they are *not* gods. Greek philosophy got to this point about four to five hundred years before Christ but here it is enshrined in Hebrew theology three thousand five hundred years ago (to be written down in the Book of Genesis much later). At this time all the

*continued overleaf/...*

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religion and culture of the peoples surrounding the Hebrews believed the sun or the planets were gods. No, said the Hebrew patriarchs - they are *created* things, everything we comprehend with our senses (music, for example, as well as the natural world) is created by God, there is no other God or gods. That is what Genesis says. Further, the picture from Genesis that Darwin worked against was derived more from pagan philosophy than the Bible - Origen and Augustine (early theologians) wanted to show how the Bible concurred with pagan philosophy (i.e. Greek and Roman thinking). In particular they wanted to affirm Plato's belief in *forms* therefore Genesis was seen as saying that all the animals, birds and creatures were made complete, at once - and that humans by contrast were made in the image of God - separate from the animals. But this is not what is in Genesis - "*And God said ... Let the waters bring forth ... Let the earth bring forth*" (Genesis 1:11, 1:20 & 1:24). This bringing forth is reminiscent of the accelerated evolution and mutation seen today within species. And no, Genesis does not assert *literally* that the universe was made in six days - though ironically everything that is in the universe was there in potential at the split second of the 'big bang', nothing was added afterwards - God "*said*" and it was; the universe and then the earth "*brought forth*", which makes the six days in Genesis seem quite a long time! God "*said*" - the *Word of God* issued forth (John's Gospel, the prologue at the beginning of chapter 1). Are we made in the image of God? Are we different from the animals, birds - other species? Are we really no different from chimpanzees?

**R**ecently an American sociologist observed the hushed reverential awe with which anthropologists greeted a fragment of fossilised bone that had been flown in (first class) from Africa, then by motorcade to the museum where it was displayed behind bullet-proof glass with subdued lighting, reached by only by a select few through several rooms (chambers) before they could behold this (possible) missing link : "*Ancestor worship*" screamed the sociologist. And he was right. You can worship God or you can worship human reason. The choice is that stark, that simple. However, the distinction driven by scientists between creationism and evolutionism is not as simple and clear cut as either side would like to believe. If you want to read more try *Darwin on Trial* - a book by a respected law professor turned theologian, Phillip Johnson, who assesses the evidence for evolution as presented by Darwin (and promoted by contemporary scientists) as if it was to be submitted in a trial and demonstrates it is flimsy and insubstantial and would be thrown out by a trial judge. No, evolution does not give us the wider picture - as Johnson shows, there simply is no vast body of empirical data supporting the *theory*.

*Oh, and the Church from whom I quoted the statement about what Christians believe? No it was not an Evangelical, Pentecostal or Baptist Church. It was from the website of the Parish Church of St Mary, Wimbledon!*

**Paul Brazier**

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THURSDAYS IN LENT  
8.00 pm Truman Room

## **“...ACT JUSTLY”**

Six sessions to help us think and act  
biblically on world issues.

Led by members of Christ Church

6 March    *A Call to Act Justly*  
13 March   *Social Action*  
20 March   *Drop the Debt*  
27 March   *Fair Trade and Consumer Power*  
3 April    *Justice in Global Trade*  
10 April    *An Ethical Lifestyle*

*“He has showed you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

MICAH 6:8

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*...don't forget the*

## **PARISH WEEKEND**

*7th - 9th November 2003*

at Wychcroft, the Southwark Diocesan Retreat House

Led by Canon Maureen Palmer  
Canon Pastor of Guildford Cathedral

*In the early summer the church wardens will be arranging a meeting to plan the weekend with Canon Palmer.*

*If you would like to be part of that small group, please tell Sue or Jenny.*

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# Christ Church 'Information'

**C H U R C H                      D I A R Y**  
C a n d l e m a s            t o            E a s t e r            2003



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| <p><b>2 Feb</b>    <i>THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST</i><br/>10.00 am All Age Communion<br/>11.30 am Auction of Promises</p> <p><b>4 Feb</b>    11.00 am Holy Communion</p> <p><b>6 Feb</b>    9.30 am Holy Communion<br/>8.00 pm PCC Meeting with The Ven Nick Baines</p> <p><b>8 Feb</b>    10.30-4.00 Quiet Day, St Michael's Ham Common</p> <p><b>9 Feb</b>    <i>The Fourth Sunday before Lent</i></p> <p><b>11 Feb</b>    7.45 pm Accompanied Prayer Group</p> <p><b>16 Feb</b>    <i>The Third Sunday before Lent</i><br/>Celia's last Sunday</p> <p><b>20 Feb</b>    8.00 pm Book Club at 1 Rosevine Road</p> <p><b>23 Feb</b>    <i>The Second Sunday before Lent</i></p> <p><b>2 Mar</b>    <i>The Sunday before Lent</i></p> <p><b>5 Mar</b>    <b>ASH WEDNESDAY</b><br/>11 am Holy Communion<br/>8 pm Sung Eucharist at St Matthew's</p> <p><b>6 Mar</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>7 Mar</b>    Women's World Day of Prayer</p> <p><b>9 Mar</b>    <i>The First Sunday of Lent</i></p> <p><b>11 Mar</b>    7.45 pm Accompanied Prayer Group</p> <p><b>13 Mar</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>14 Mar</b>    10.00 am Study Group</p> <p><b>16 Mar</b>    <i>The Second Sunday of Lent</i></p> <p><b>19 Mar</b>    8.00 pm PCC Meeting</p> | <p><b>20 Mar</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>21 Mar</b>    10.00 am Study Group<br/>12.30 Lent Lunch</p> <p><b>23 Mar</b>    <i>The Third Sunday of Lent</i></p> <p><b>27 Mar</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>28 Mar</b>    10.00 am Study Group</p> <p><b>30 Mar</b>    <b>MOTHERING SUNDAY</b></p> <p><b>1 Apr</b>    11.00 am Holy Communion</p> <p><b>3 Apr</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>4 Apr</b>    10.00 am Study Group</p> <p><b>6 Apr</b>    <i>The Fifth Sunday of Lent</i></p> <p><b>8 Apr</b>    7.45 pm Accompanied Prayer Group</p> <p><b>10 Apr</b>    8.00 pm Lent Course</p> <p><b>11 Apr</b>    10.00 am Study Group<br/>12.30 Lent Lunch</p> <p><b>13 Apr</b>    <b>PALM SUNDAY</b></p> <p><b>14 Apr</b>    8.00 pm Address and Night Prayer</p> <p><b>15 Apr</b>    8.00 pm Address and Night Prayer</p> <p><b>16 Apr</b>    8.00 pm Address and Night Prayer</p> <p><b>17 Apr</b>    <b>MAUNDY THURSDAY</b><br/>8.00 pm Sung Eucharist</p> <p><b>18 Apr</b>    <b>GOOD FRIDAY</b><br/>12.00 noon - Two Hour Reflection Canon Ian Ainsworth-Smith<br/>2.00 pm The Liturgy of the Passion of Our Lord</p> <p><b>20 Apr</b>    <b>EASTER DAY</b></p> |
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But hallow the  
**LORD**  
**CHRIST**  
in your hearts.