

# St Peter's Church

Burwood Road, Hershams

## Christmas 2006

Printed below is a special prayer for Christmas. It's called a Collect, because it gathers together various themes that the Church wants to communicate during the festival of Christmas.

It starts by addressing God (the Father) as an eternal being, not limited by the boundaries of time or space. It assumes that the prayer will be used at Christmas midnight services in church, when the world is quieter than usual: 'in the stillness'.

It describes the infant Jesus Christ (born in the stable) as God's 'almighty word', which is strange given his obvious weakness and relative insignificance to the people around at the time. It claims that his arrival is intended to pierce darkness with light, and to bring peace to the world and joy to our hearts.

I hope that this Collect may be true for you and the people around you:

- that where there is darkness Jesus Christ will pierce it with light,
- that he may be the foundation for peace in the world and joy in individual hearts.

I don't pretend that this is achieved overnight (not even over this very special night), nor that he can do it without human assistance, nor that it will be complete

this side of heaven. But the Church hopes for it, and wishes to do what it can to make it more, rather than less, likely. If, over Christmas, or in the coming year, you find yourself wanting to learn more about God or to seek his support and guidance, then you would be very welcome to come one of our services at St Peter's, or to give us a ring.

*Revd Nick Whitehead*

Christmas Midnight Collect:

***Eternal God,  
in the stillness of this night  
you sent your almighty Word  
to pierce the world's darkness with the light of  
salvation:  
give to the earth the peace that we long for  
and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven  
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ.***

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## Christmas traditions

Most homes in the parish will have a Christmas tree this year. You probably know that the tradition of the Christmas tree was started by Queen Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, who introduced it to this country from Germany to remind him of the Christmas customs in his native Germany.

Do you also have an advent wreath or crown in your house? Does Blue Peter still produce the coathanger-and-tinsel version each year as they used to?!

St Peter's has a rather fine Advent wreath which we hang up every year and you may be interested to know the tradition behind this custom.

Our advent wreath has five candles which represent five people, or groups of people, who heralded the coming of God into the world.

The first candle stands for the patriarchs of the Old Testament such as Abraham. The second represents the prophets, like Isaiah, and the third, John the Baptist. The fourth candle, lit the last Sunday before Christmas, represents the virgin Mary and the final one, not lit until Christmas Day itself, of course represents Jesus.

*O Lord of all good life, wise Giver of the seasons,  
While the days are dark, may we bring light and joy,  
While the earth is cold, may we bring warmth and  
love,  
While the plants sleep, may we make ready for the  
New Year.*

**“Growing Christians to worship God and serve his world”**

## Confessions of a vicar's daughter!

Christmas in a vicarage is definitely different! As the daughter of a vicar, my childhood memories of Christmas are probably different to most.

First there were the carol singers. Living in a vicarage, it wasn't the done thing to pretend not to be in when the doorbell rang, and the wavering sounds of "We wish you a merry Christmas" echoed through the letter box accompanied by the rattling of money boxes. But why was it always my turn to answer the door?!

Then there was the decorating of the church. Vicarage gardens often have tall holly bushes in them (needless to say with all the red berries at the top), and since my father didn't like ladders it was up to us children to scabble up wet trees and dangle in precarious positions to cut down holly.

Vicarage children have either to have the ability to sing, or failing that, at least the ability to stand in the choir stall and make a noise of some kind - since this was easier than listening to the vicar's "Well, if I can't persuade my own children to sing in the choir, then how can I persuade anybody else's?" However, come Christmas time, it was time to leave the comparative warmth and comfort (I did say comparative!) of the choir stalls, and set off bravely on the traditional choir carol-singing expedition. With the rain trickling steadily down our necks, and our fingers and toes starting to resemble ice-blocks, our plaintive cries of "Can we go back to the vicarage for coffee and

mince-pies" were tossed aside with a "Come along, we've only just started. Let's have a rousing *Tis the season to be jolly* to get us all in the mood!"

On Christmas Day, the morning was devoted to services, as my father dashed from one church to another, his family following in his wake (late as usual!). As a child, I can remember feeling at a distinct disadvantage living in a vicarage because, unlike our friends, the traditional present-giving around the tree had to wait until the afternoon. It's only now, as an adult, that I can see that this arrangement has the effect of making sure that all of the vicarage occupants are really reminded - several times - of the true meaning of Christmas; a very definite bonus of vicarage Christmas life.

Following the present giving, the rest of the day usually passed in a tired haze, with the biggest dilemmas being which box of chocolates to open first! Then, as another Christmas drew to an end, we all slumbered peacefully in the armchairs, our festive spirit exhausted, and with only enough energy to wish you all a very joyful Christmas - and, I hope, a more restful one than ours!

*Alison Durnford*

## Christmas Services

Sunday 17th December	Christmas Carol Service	6.30pm
Christmas Eve	Parish Communion	10.00am
	Crib Service	5.30pm
	Midnight Communion	11.00pm
Christmas Day	Holy Communion	8.00am
	All Age Christmas Celebration	10.00am

The Parish Office is open on weekday mornings from 9.30am - 11.30am to receive general enquiries including baptisms, weddings and funerals.

The Parish Office, 1 Burwood Road, Hersham, Walton On Thames, Surrey KT12 4AA  
01932 253452 (Answerphone outside of office hours)  
Email: [theoffice@stpetershersham.com](mailto:theoffice@stpetershersham.com)  
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For Church Hall Bookings only: 01932 227152

**St. Peter's is a Church of England parish in the Guildford Diocese  
and a member of 'Churches together in Hersham'**