

Lent – Its not exactly party time!

Its lent again! It doesn't have the same cachet to it as Christmas or Easter does it? We live in a society that wants us to have everything and have it now. Our culture says, you want fresh strawberries in January, no problem. You want a bigger house, a faster car – they're yours. Lent is one of the very few counter-cultural celebrations left to us in the church.

What is *lent*? On Ash Wednesday many people mark their foreheads with ash, and then begin "fasting" (or abstaining from certain foods or physical pleasures) for 40 days. Whereas Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, lent is preparation for the sacrifice he made upon the cross for each of us.

Why 40 days? 40 is a significant number in the Bible. For example:

- In Genesis, the flood which destroyed the earth was brought about by 40 days and nights of rain.
- The Hebrews spent 40 years in the wilderness before reaching the promised land.
- Moses fasted for 40 days before receiving the ten commandments.
- Jesus spent 40 days fasting in the wilderness in preparation for his ministry.

Most Christians regard Jesus' time in the wilderness as the key event for the duration of Lent.

The Christian churches that observe Lent in the 21st century (and not all do significantly) use it as a time for prayer and penance. The number of people who fast for the whole of Lent seems

to be constantly declining, although some maintain the practice on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. It is more common these days to surrender a particular vice such as favourite foods or smoking. Whatever sacrifice is made it is intended to be a reminder of Jesus' deprivation in the wilderness, and an act of love.

Lent is so counter-cultural because its about taking your eyes off of the physical and looking deeper at life.

I was standing inside that famous London chocolate shop La Maison Du Chocolat and was amazed at the lure this Mayan Gold held for so many. By the look on the faces of many customers, giving up chocolate was the last thing on their minds.

"What are you going to do for lent?" I know you were probably thinking I was going to say, "what are you giving up for lent." There is a new and increasingly popular way to observe or perhaps gently celebrate lent. You might like to try this practice also. Lent - Day 1 – Spend some time in silence and ask God to speak to you. Day 2 – Look for ways to genuinely smile at the people you meet. Day 3 – call someone on the telephone and wish them well. Day 4 – offer to do a chore for someone. Day 5 – lend a book or a CD to a friend. Day 6 – write to someone who did something nice for you and thank them. Day 7 – light a candle and pray for someone. You get the idea. Think up 40 things to do over 40 days that will in some small way show God's love at work in you. 40 days! A lot can happen in 40 days.

Howard

Chronicle

Keeping in touch

Following the appreciative comments about the last article supporting our housebound parishioners I am raising a few more issues which are important to them and keep the rest of us aware.

As Christmas is now over for another year it is worth pointing out how grateful were those who could not get to church for their Holy Communion and yet were visited by our caring clergy. It is distressing to be alone at home knowing that friends are in church receiving the Eucharist and be unable to do anything about it. I am therefore passing on their thanks and the hope that during Lent and at Easter they will receive further visits.

Now onto health matters... With people popping in to see them on a regular basis (and we hope that happens), it is important for the house-bound to get their flu jabs. Germs and viruses can be brought into the house in so many ways.

Prescriptions can be a problem. If a home visit from a doctor results in a prescription then there is no harm in asking him/her to drop it into the pharmacy. There is an excellent delivery service now from several of our local pharmacies who only need a request by phone. Repeat prescriptions can also be phoned through.

If you visit an elderly person who is frustrated by the services of a locum doctor or district nurse bear in mind the experience of a friend of mine who was told by a locum doctor "Oh I see, I'd no idea that was the problem. When I get back to the surgery I must have a look at your notes"! No wonder she wanted to let off steam when I called. That kind of annoyance is often one that those that live alone want to unload and visitors need to be prepared for this. I realise that the only action we can take is to offer a sympathetic ear but it helps a little.

As a result of another request I have discovered some excellent news about our local library service. All who are registered with Oxfordshire County Council's Social Services as: disabled, blind or partially sighted, deaf or hearing impaired or are receiving incapacity benefit, attendance allowance, disablement benefits or allowances are entitled to a marvellous resource from either Temple Cowley or the Central Oxford libraries. By phone or by logging on you can order up to 20 books, 5 music CDs, 5 DVDs or 5 audio books to be delivered to your home. The length of time for borrowing is very generous. To know more you can phone Hilary Whealton on **01295 268249** or Ken Saberi on **01865 810209**. Alternatively go to www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/libraries anytime 24/7 (as they say) and you can access the whole catalogue of available material and find out how to join.

I do hope this article will reassure our housebound friends that they are not forgotten but please remember to pop in and see them or at least give them a call from time-to-time especially during the dreary winter months.

Rosanne Butler

History in St James' Churchyard

Snowdrops (Galanthus Bivalis)

No one can be immune to the charm of Snowdrops which are now shaping as milky beds in the churchyard.

They were traditionally one of the Virgin Mary's flowers and used to decorate Lady Chapels on the Feast of Purification on 2nd February. Snowdrops were often used for crowns and wreaths from mid-January to mid March.

There are more than 75 different species, although it is Galanthus Bivalis that is commonly cultivated in our gardens, and there are more than 400 known varieties of this.

It is generally thought not to be a British native but to have originated in the mountains of central and southern Europe, although the bulbs have adapted wonderfully well in the damp shade of British woodlands.

They are happiest under trees and should not be planted in open grass.

Snowdrops spread mainly by seed (although Squirrels, voles, moles and even worms are all capable of spreading bulbs) and it takes about five years for a seed to mature to the point of flowering. Bees are an important factor in setting the seed.

On February 9th and 10th and 16th and 17th St James will be open to welcome people to come and see the beautiful snowdrops in our churchyard and to offer tea, coffee and homemade cakes in church.

History in the Church

On 9th February at 2.30pm Rosanne Butler will give a talk on the history of St James Church with slides in church.



In past years we have had people from all parts of Oxford and other places who have memories of life in Cowley to share with us or are interested in our church.

Do come along to talk to them and/or enjoy a social time with those manning the church.

There will be a list in church for you to offer your time to man the church or to make a cake. We would welcome your help.

Gwen Ranklin

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ANCH qualified Garden designer



ROSANNE INTERVIEWS Dan Edwards

I have a secret to reveal! Not, it's not about this month's interviewee, but about someone very close to him. My husband, Frank, has lost his heart to a certain young lady, a (nearly) two-year-old named Mollie, and Mollie is Dan's daughter. I think the die was cast the first time Dan brought her to our baby and toddler group, Seashells. Mind you, I have to admit that she is a very loveable little girl as is her baby sister Daisy, but then so are all the little poppets who come and play each Tuesday morning in the Church Centre.

However, let me introduce Dan. He is one of those happy people who enjoys his work, love his home and family and waxes lyrical about living in Cowley, which makes him a kindred spirit in my book. So what is it about living here that he enjoys so much? Mainly the people (us!) whom he describes as really nice and friendly. He also says that he and his wife Claire have all their needs close at hand - shops, doctor's surgery, schools for

later on, public transport, a library, swimming pool, Florence Park for walks with their children and their friendly black Labrador, but most of all a lovely, welcoming parish church. So what brought him to Cowley in the first place? Well, it's quite a journey.

Dan was born in Cheshire, in Chalmondley, one of those villages with a quintessentially English pronunciation. He grew up on a farm, with his elder sister and learnt to love the great outdoors. His schooling began in the local village but later on his parents sent him to private school in Chester. His favourite subject by miles was – cricket! However, he did succeed in A level subjects geography, Greek history and religious studies which qualified him for a place at Bristol University. His degree was in business studies and marketing.

It was during his gap year that Dan became a Christian. Although he remembers a Christian ethos in his family home as a child, he recalls a

life-changing experience one day in his late teens when he recognised the Holy Spirit filling his whole being. He had just parked his car early one beautiful morning and was walking towards his workplace (a casual student job in a brewery in Bristol). He told me his whole body tingled and he felt full of warmth and love. His eyes were opened to the beauty of the morning and he appreciated things as he had never done before. The feeling stayed with him for the next few days, so, unusually for him, he got up early the following Sunday and went to church at Christ Church in Bristol. The welcome he received was warm, the congregation was largely young people. He worshipped there until he graduated and then went to work in Twyford at a drug rehabilitation centre. By then he had been baptised for a second time so that he might feel a fully committed Christian..

At the drug 'rehab' he had worked mainly with people in the open air, doing gardening and other outdoor work, so it's not surprising that he

only stayed at Neilson's in Headington, his first post after university, for just a few months. He left and got a job with Oxford City Council Parks Department working during the spring and summer mainly in the University Parks, where, to his great pleasure he could watch a bit of first-class cricket. A job driving for TNT followed, but three years later he set up his own business and is now able to employ a couple of people to work with him, so successful has it been.

He describes his work as helping people who love their gardens but are no longer able to maintain them. 'Time and Space' is the name of one of his companies. The other is called 'Branching Out'. You see Dan is a skilled tree surgeon. He has ample work in our neighbourhood and of course he works out of doors all year round which makes him a happy man.



His passion for the game of cricket is immense. It occupies most of his leisure time, from net practice during the winter months to club matches throughout the summer.

The other happiness in his life is his wife Claire, whom he met at The Vineyard Church when it was temporarily housed at Magdalen School. He was on carpark duty the first time they spoke and reckons that she was attracted to his fluorescent jacket. Their romance flourished over a May Bank Holiday weekend and their first real date was on Bank Holiday Monday with a pub lunch at the Isis in Iffley and a walk back along the towpath.

Now, I defy anyone to beat that for a better way to fall in love! Claire now works at Helen and Douglas House.

Last year she came home from work with the news that a group of people had been given the chance to do a charity walk for six days along The Great Wall of China. Claire wanted to do it and would Dan go too to raise funds for Helen and Douglas House? He agreed, all was arranged, and then Claire found she was preg-

nant. So Dan did the walk anyway. It was a hugely challenging expedition. He told me that at one point in the walk one person in the group collapsed and was unable to go on, it was so physically demanding. However, Dan made it and has, so far, raised £4800 in sponsor money, though he'd love to round it up to £5000.

After marrying Claire in '2004 -ish (!) they moved from their home in East Oxford to Lytton Road from where he runs his business. When I asked if there was anything else he'd like me to include in this article he said 'Just say for me life's wonderful!'

How would you describe yourself as a small child?

I loved being outdoors. I think I was pretty easy-going, much as I am now.

If you could effect a major change in the world, what would it be?

I want more tolerance between people rather than more hate.

Is there anything in life today that you feel is positive?

A very happy family life. It is

wonderful to live near to and belong to a great parish church. Good friends are like gold.

Do you have a treasured possession?

Apart from my wife, my daughters and my dog, it would have to be my cricket bat.

Do you have a hero or heroine past or present?

It would be Jesus.

How do you like to spend your leisure time?

I don't have a lot with two small girls but we do go on walks together along the river. Claire's an amazing cook so we do love entertaining friends and then there's cricket, not just in the summer. Nets start at the end of January! We're a pub team, we call ourselves Far From the MCC.

Are there any places in the world you'd like to visit?

We both love France and Canada, but I'd quite like to visit New Zealand.

Do you have plans or ambitions for the future?

Just make sure I have a good work/life balance and enjoy watching our daughters grow up.

Notes from the December PCC

The meeting mainly focussed on a visual presentation which illustrated the need for our two churches to work together and the state of our finances. The Treasurer reported a significant deficit in our budget for the coming year even without any mission giving. The Finance Committee had put forward several proposals which were fully discussed and mostly approved. Our Parish Share has been paid for the current year.

The PCC expressed concern that a new priest should be appointed to work along with Howard after Beth and Michael have left.

Unauthorised parking at St. James' Church Centre has become a problem and permit badges are available to those who need to use the Centre.

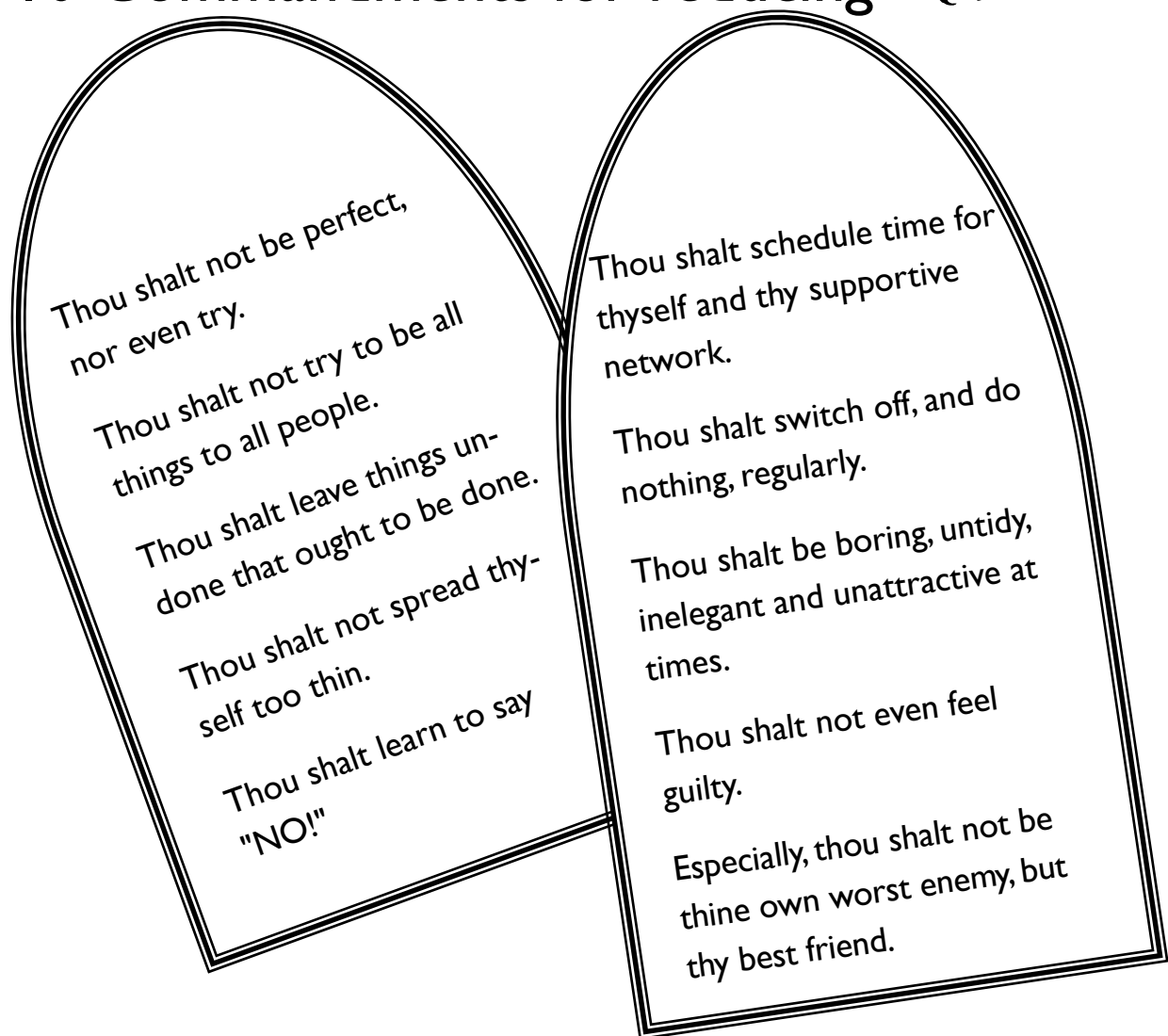
St. Francis' Church has received a request for the Food Bank to use the premises twice a week to help those in immediate need and this was agreed.

**In a rose there is a thorn
It pierceth where
The heart doth form.
The Lord is risen
Christ has come
His pierceth side
He bleedeth love
Life eternal
Filled with love.**

**Heaven is not far away
Our only Lord came down to say.
Love came down, yes Love Divine
Yes have come, come drink my wine.
Believe in me I am the One
I am the One God's Only Son.
Bleed I did on Calvary
Life to give eternally.**

Paul

10 Commandments for reducing stress



THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE BLESSED

What shall I ask of the year that is dawning? What shall I hope as I face the New Day? What shall I ask on the first morning? What shall I wish and for what should I pray

Ask for an eye that is open to beauty
Ask for a faith that no bludgeon can break
Ask for the patience to do every duty
With a good humour that nothing can shake

Now at this time of the Year new beginning. Pray these gifts outweigh all the rest

For without these there is nought worth winning
Ask for these things that your days may be blessed.

Gwen Fancutt

The February healing service is on the 13th, at St James' at 7.30.

Sunday Services

ST JAMES' CHURCH, BEAUCHAMP LANE

8.00 am	Holy Communion
10.00 am	Sung Eucharist (<i>exc 2nd Sunday</i>)
	All Age Eucharist (<i>2nd Sunday</i>)

ST FRANCIS' CHURCH, HOLLOW WAY

10.30 am	Parish Eucharist
	[<i>Family Eucharist –</i>
	<i>2nd Sunday of the month</i>]

Mid-Week Services & Meetings

Monday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Group – <i>St Francis</i>
	2.30 pm	Parish Mothers' Union – <i>St James (3rd Mon)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Tuesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	10.00 am	Seashells – <i>Church Centre</i>
	10.00 am	Toddler Service – <i>St Francis</i>
	12.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St James</i>
	12.30 pm	Tuesday Lunch Club – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Friends of <i>St Francis</i> – <i>St Francis (2nd & 4th)</i>
5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>	
Wednesday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	2.30 pm	Tea Break – <i>St Francis (1st Wed)</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
Thursday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	7.00 pm	Eucharist – <i>St Francis</i>
Friday	9.00 am	Morning Prayer – <i>St James</i>
	5.00 pm	Evening Prayer – <i>St James</i>

Day Off

Michael can be contacted in the evenings and at weekends. Beth can be contacted during the day as well.

Parish Directory

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