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How you can mature as a Christian this coming year

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love... Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Ephesians 4:2, 15-16

What are you going to be when you grow up? For many of us, it was a dreaded adult question! At heart, though, it presupposes the significance of ongoing development, maturity, direction, intention, purpose. As such, it's a good question for Christian communities to

ask of themselves. Paul's answer in Ephesians is that when the church reaches maturity, it will attain to 'the whole measure of the fullness of Christ'. It assumes we still have growing to do.

Paul had outlined the great plan of God to bring all things together in Christ. This had its beginning in the church, the creation of a new humanity in Christ, in whom God dwells by the Spirit. It's on the basis of this new identity that Paul brings a series of exhortations to the church, the first of which is to guard the unity entrusted to them.

Those who have been 'rooted and established in love' are now asked to live accordingly, 'bearing with

one another in love', being willing to endure discomfort for the sake of others rather than asserting their own rights.

And we need love, Paul says, in order to become mature. We grow out of infancy into adulthood by 'speaking the truth in love' – or confessing the truth. Where the church is at risk of falsehood being spread in a deceptive manner, truth needs to be confessed in a loving manner. I am less likely to be unstable and immature if my fellow believers are constantly reminding me of the message of truth, particularly if they are doing so from a loving heart, concerned about the growth of the body. Truth embodied in love.

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Services

Sundays

11.00am Sung Eucharist

"Sunday Supplement" the children's activity takes place every Sunday in the sacristy during the service

Weekday Services

Said Eucharist

Tuesday 7.30pm

Wednesday 9.30am

Friday 7.30am

Saints' & Holy Days

Sunday 4th January Epiphany

11.00am Sung Eucharist and procession to the crib

Sunday 25th January The Conversion of St Paul

11.00am Parish Mass

6.00pm Thanksgiving Mass for the ministry of Bishop Peter at St Paul's Cathedral. All welcome.

Clergy Day off: Fr. Guy is off duty on Monday but don't hesitate to call him in emergencies.

The Vicar is usually available in the Vicarage, 85 Dartmouth Park Road, from 8:00pm until 9:00pm on Tuesdays for the purpose of interviews, arranging Baptisms, reading of Banns and Weddings etc. he is also available to hear confessions then or by appointment.

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Here, then, is a vision of a church where each member lives for the wellbeing of the whole body as we grow and build one another up in love. So it is that the 'in love' of 4:2 is repeated in 4:15 and then again in 4:16, describing the sphere in which Christian living takes place, the atmosphere in which all-member ministry happens, the most

100 Club Winners

Draw for November 2014

1st prize: Wendy Shale

2nd prize: Lucy Boyd

3rd prize: George Nesbitt

4th prize: Trudy Tabone

Congratulations to you all and thanks for your support each month.

25 January St Paul - THE FIRST CHRISTIAN INTELLECTUAL

One million of us go to C of E churches^o.

This month, on 25th January, the Church celebrates probably the most famous conversion of all. At least, what happened to a young man called Saul on the road to Damascus has become a byword for all instant conversions - what is known as a 'damascene' moment. Saul was a devout Jew, a Pharisee, a student of Gamaliel and a fierce critic of the followers of Jesus, then a very new sect on the religious scene.

On his way to Damascus to organise a purge of Christians in that city, he was blinded by a bright light and heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He asked the identity of the voice, and it replied, 'Jesus, whom you are persecuting'. Stunned by the experience, he followed further instructions which led him to a Christian man in Damascus, who prayed with him. As he did, Saul's sight was restored.

The experience convinced him that Jesus - crucified in Jerusalem four or five years earlier - was in fact the Messiah and had risen from the dead. After a period of instruction, Saul was baptised and took the name by which history has recognised him, Paul. At first, some Christians were wary about the reality of his conversion, but over a period of time he was accepted and indeed eventually recognised as an 'apostle', a 'special messenger' of Jesus Christ.

His intellectual stature and leadership gifts quickly marked him out, and within a few years he became a leading figure in the emerging Christian Church, preaching and

founding churches all over the Middle East, largely of Gentile converts. He was eventually martyred in Rome, probably in 65AD.

Paul was the first intellectual of the Christian Church, the man who was able to set the events of the life and teaching of Jesus, and especially his death and resurrection, into a coherent theology, with its roots very clearly in the Jewish faith of his own upbringing. He's not always easy to follow. Even the New Testament admits that: 'there are some things (in his letters) hard to understand' (2 Peter 3:16). But at the same time he gave the new faith a foundation and credibility which have stood it well down the centuries.

Many people think of Paul as a rather negative, narrow misogynist, but even a quick reading of his letters actually reveals a person of great warmth, who evoked enormous affection and devotion from others. 'You would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me!' he writes to the Christians at Galatia. He was, of course, a man of his time and culture, in days when women were disregarded in terms of status and leadership.

But read his letters, and see how large a role women play in them and how much scope he gave them to lead and teach in the Church. In terms of the first century, St Paul was a dangerous liberal!

I think the amazing Paul of Tarsus deserves a bit of celebrating on 25th January.

Recently published Church of England statistics for 2013 show that an average of one million people attend services each week, down about 1% on the previous year.

The one million figure relates to regular weekly parish and cathedral services and does not include other core services carried out by the Church of England on a regular basis. With some 2,000 baptisms, 1,000 weddings and 3,000 funerals conducted every week it is estimated that a further half a million people attend a service conducted by a Church of England minister every week.

In addition the count (which takes place in October) does not include the many carol and nativity services during Advent and many other regular services responding to community need. The services carried out by the Church of England's chaplains in hospitals, prisons, schools, universities and military bases are also excluded from the attendance totals.

Figures for Christmas attendance show a stable trend, with 2.4 million people attending services on Christmas Eve and Day - where figures have hovered around the 2.5 million mark over the past decade.

A new part of the 2013 research reveal that nearly half of the 67,000 new joiners to churches are coming for the first time rather than from another church. This was the first time a split was introduced in the joiners and leavers section to measure those moving to or from other local churches.

Shepherding God's Flock ± what does it take to be a good church leader?

As we give thanks for the ministry of Bishop Peter and look forward to the appointment of his successor some thoughts on the qualities that are needed.

1 Peter 5:1-7: "... I exhort the elders among you to tend the flock of God that is in your charge, exercising the oversight, not under compulsion but willingly, as God would have you do it—not for sordid gain but eagerly. Do not lord it over those in your charge, but be examples to the flock."

As the New Year gets underway, what might you hope for from your local church leaders this year? This scripture contains a challenge to all of them: to rightly serve as Christ's under-shepherds, they must be the right kind of leaders.

Peter directs that all the elders of the churches are primarily followers of Jesus. Jesus called his disciples to follow him – if necessary, all the way to his death. Peter came to understand the cross was not to be avoided, but embraced as the pattern for a true believer's life.

Church leaders should be willing under-shepherds. Elders need to serve not because they must, but because they are willing. God is pleased when his people are willing to serve him gladly, whatever the cost.

Under-shepherds are not to be greedy for money. Financial greed among church leaders is evidently a problem that goes back all the way to the 1st Century!

Under-shepherds are to care for their flock, by making sure their people are offered responsible spiritual guidance. They are to faithfully teach and proclaim God's Word in a bewildering world.

Church leaders are to live lives that are a worthy example. Jesus denounced the teachers of the law who failed to practice what they preached. No hypocrites wanted here!

Church leaders are to lead with gentleness and love, as did Jesus. They are called to be under-shepherds, not cattle drivers. A cattle driver walks behind his herd with a stick, but a shepherd walks ahead of his flock and his sheep will follow him.

The great theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer put it this way: "Genuine spiritual authority is to be found only where the ministry of hearing, helping, bearing, and proclaiming is carried out." He dismissed the notion of any "personality cults": "The Church does not need brilliant personalities, but faithful servants of Jesus and the brethren."

Instead, Bonhoeffer observed that: "The Church will place its confidence only in the simple servant of the Word of Jesus Christ because it knows that then it will be guided, not according to human wisdom and human conceit, but by the Word of the Good Shepherd."

Next month: Shepherding God's flock involves also the right kind of followers. Is that you?

Christian death toll in Pakistan reaches record high

After the tragic events at a school last week it is sometimes easy to forget the daily toll of loss in that country.

An average of two to three Christian girls are being kidnapped daily, raped and forced into Islamic marriages in Pakistan, where more Christians died for their faith last year than any other year in recent memory.

In response, South Asian Christians in the UK recently called a special meeting to pray for the Christians in Pakistan. Wilson Chowdhry, of the British Pakistan Christian Association, said Christians in Pakistan face oppression daily.

"We all have friends and family in South Asia who are living in fear of persecution. Not only are young Christian girls being kidnapped and forced into marriage but we are getting reports that Hindu girls are also being kidnapped and forced to convert to Islam. Some Imams are reportedly preaching from the pulpits that forced marriage is legitimised by the Qu'ran," said Chowdhry whose wife, Juliette, lost 13 members of her family in the twin bombing in Peshwar last year. "Children have to travel to school and church on buses with armed security escorts while police and army are guarding churches."

Sheem Gill of the Scottish Asian Christian Fellowship said: "The disturbing reality is that persecution of Christians in the Islamic world has become endemic."

“Dear Friends...”

From the Vicars Desk

Once again as January arrives we have to begin to gear ourselves up for the Winter Night Shelter. There is a surprising amount of things to do for the eleven weeks that we cover. During the year our bed making team have been checking out the linen, pillows which needed washing and duvets that needed cleaning. Every year we need to replace some of the bedding and people have been very generous in providing good used items.

Then on the 7th of January we all have to have training. Some of our folk have already been to other venues for this but this session is especially for us. This year we are required to do more than previously so that the quality of the service can be constantly improved with all the helpers aware of the limits of their responsibilities as well as the opportunities that the shelter offers. C4WS are now offering language tuition as well as support towards housing and help with finding work. It is important to stress that all our guests have been referred to C4WS by a recognised agency, they are not simply off the street. Strict rules apply to them, and if broken can result in them being thrown off the programme something few of them want as they are guaranteed food and a warm nights sleep while they are on it.

Bill Saunders does a fantastic amount on behalf of the parish in organising the helpers. Its quite a task, with a number of teams in-

involved. The bed makers, the cooks, the welcomers, the overnight team, the breakfast team and the clear up team. Each week I take orders for a trip to the Cash and Carry, though some of our cooks very generously provide the food themselves.

Over the weeks we get to know our guests quite well, some are delighted to talk others prefer to remain very private, but all are immensely grateful for the warmth and human contact that they receive.

It is always interesting to see how many volunteers we get from the community, as this is a very vital spin off for the parish. Not of course that its the reason that we do it, but it is clear that people like to know that the church is actively doing something apart from sunday services. It truly is our faith in action, it even gets me out of bed at 6.30 every saturday morning to go and cook breakfast!

If you have not volunteered in the past please do think about it for this years sessions. Have a word with Bill or call him on 07837265281. It doesn't have to be a weekly commitment, though that makes life easier for Bill, but any help is welcome. How about seeing it as your Lenten extra rather than giving something up for Lent?

This month also sees the Consecration of the first woman Bishop in the Church of England, a time of rejoicing for many and sadness for some. The Church now has to find a way of living with the op-

posing views without destroying cohesiveness. It will not be easy, but it is very important that there is politeness and acceptance on both sides of the new position and a willingness to make it work.

Also in January the PCC will be looking at our budget for the coming year. What our basic costs will be, what we can afford to spend in various areas of parish life and how much we can expect to receive in promises from the congregation. If you have not yet filled in your pledge form there are more at the back of the church and it remains very helpful in the budgeting exercise to know how much people are intending to give. I recently did a Visitation on a parish on behalf of the Area Council and was told of a lady who always sits next to a member of their PCC who when challenged on her giving replied that she had been going to the church for 35 years and always gave £2! Perhaps she needs to revise that figure because to give an equivalent amount today would at the very least be £6.

May I wish you all a very happy New Year and may it be for you all a year of spiritual growth and development.

Your Parish Priest

Flight fright

An amateur pilot wannabe, I knew I'd finally made progress with my flight training the day my instructor turned to me and said, "You know, you're not as much fun since you stopped screaming."

ACHIEVING YOUR RESOLUTION in 2015

Every year millions of people do it - make New Year Resolutions. The most common resolves are to give up smoking or to achieve some planned weight loss. They embark on the enterprise on 1st January, but we all suspect that by the end of the month they'll be back on the fags or have resumed tucking into the burgers.

The problem is little to do with a failure of will-power, but simply that in both cases they are tilting at windmills: a serious chemical addiction, and a very natural human desire for rich food - 'marrow and fatness', as the Psalmist called it. Those who do succeed have usually had recourse to vital support, either (where smoking is concerned) medical help from a clinic or surgery, and where dieting is concerned a group like Weight-watchers or the constant vigilance of friends or family. Once achieved, the goal is often then maintained, certainly where smoking is concerned.

So are 'resolutions' useless? Do

they simply expect too much of us - indeed, more than unaided human will-power can achieve? I suspect that in the case of smoking and weight loss 'unaided' is the key word. Both resolutions require that external help (though I do have friends who have managed it without). For many people that 'external help' can be prayer - their own, and that of their supporters.

The trouble with failed resolutions is that we may then feel that the cause is lost forever. We've done our best, and it wasn't good enough. We label ourselves hopeless cases, and order the next packet of cigarettes or a box of doughnuts. In truth, taking on smoking or slimming in the context of an individual new year resolution is a bit like swimming the channel - not impossible, but jolly difficult. (And if at this moment you're trying to do it, I salute you and hope and pray that you succeed.)

But what about other resolutions? Experience tells us that there is a better chance of success if we set

ourselves, initially at least, more modest but important goals. How about a resolution not to complain about the weather? Or to go to bed at a sensible time? Or to smile at the neighbour who keeps putting his bin where mine should go? Or to say 'thanks' to the bus driver as I get off?

On a slightly more exalted level, why not a resolution to make time every day for reflection, prayer and perhaps a short Bible reading? Or to go back to church (if we've stopped going) or be a bit more positive about it if we haven't?

'Resolution' has two meanings: a 'resolve' to do something, and the result of doing it (the 'resolution' of the problem). Perhaps it might help all of us if we concentrated on the latter rather than the former this New Year, keeping our eyes on that desirable goal rather than the difficulties of getting there. As the RAF motto says, *Per Ardua ad Astra* - through challenge to the heights!

Faith leaders on the frontline of the Ebola crisis

Faith leaders across West Africa are using their unique positions of influence within their communities to warn of the dangers of the deadly Ebola virus. And they are being helped by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Tearfund and World Vision.

The agencies are working through established religious networks across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to teach communities about Ebola, offer support to people affected, and ensure survivors are not stigmatised when they return home.

Traditional funeral practices have been highlighted as one of the greatest causes of the continued spread of the disease. As a result, agencies are working with Christian and Muslim leaders to teach communities about the importance of safe but dignified burials.

Over £6 million has already been donated to the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) appeal to help people devastated by the Ebola crisis in West Africa. The DEC says it is "overwhelmed" by the generosity of the British public. If you would like to help, visit www.dec.org.uk, call the 24 hour hotline on 0370 60 60 900, or donate £5 by texting the word SUPPORT to 70000.

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Visit

A parishioner called the vicar during a power-cut caused by a blizzard and said she urgently needed a pastoral home visit. "I'm sorry, but I can't get out because of the heavy snow," the vicar explained.

Unsatisfied, she barked, "But I can't watch TV! So what else am I supposed to do?"

100 Ways to get your church noticed!

In today's society, we can rarely do anything without something screaming for our attention, whether it's in-her-face TV advertising, incessant text messages, billboards plastered with designer logos or addictive social media apps. In a typical day, we will be exposed to more than 3,000 adverts – from the obvious ones in newspapers and on websites to more subtle commercial logos on supermarket plastic bags or the side of beer glasses.

Not surprisingly, many churches struggle to make their voices heard above the cacophony. Some still rely on methods they used 40 years ago to try to communicate their messages – the hand-drawn poster stuck to the church noticeboard, the photocopied parish magazine, or the verbal notice at the start of worship. Because there is so much more information for everyone to absorb these days, even regular churchgoers may miss the casual

reference to an event or an opportunity.

Not only are some of the methods we use liable to be swamped by a thousand and one other things, but they may also be the wrong types of communication for the kind of people we want to attract. The vast majority of people in the UK could be classed as 'browsers' – not those who devour books, but those who might flick through magazines or websites, stopping only to read when an eye-catching headline or photo catches their attention.

Broadly speaking, congregations and church leaders will tend to be among the 'readers' within the population. The type of communication they use tends to be text-based, rather than visual. Yet for the vast majority of people, this often isn't attractive.

We live in a highly visual age, with umpteen digital TV channels to

choose from, millions of snazzy, image-based web pages to look at, and well-designed glossy magazines in every newsagent. Give a 'browser' a typical piece of church literature, and it's unlikely to grab their attention for long.

So how can we make sure our churches, activities, events and people get noticed in this busy, secular, visual world? This book incorporates ideas you might understand as 'publicity' in the normal sense – websites, posters, parish magazines, media liaison, social media – and other ideas that have more to do with involvement with the local community or the look and feel of our church building. These also have a valuable role to play in our church's communications strategy.

This is an extract from the book '100 Ways To Get Your Church Noticed' by Neil Pugmire, published by Church House Publishing. For more info, or to buy a copy, see www.getyourchurchnoticed.com

Why are chaplains becoming so popular in modern Britain?

You may wonder why, in a Britain that is becoming more secular, so many organisations are appointing chaplains. We are used to chaplains in schools and universities, hospitals, prisons or the armed forces, or Parliament. But so many other organisations are now appointing chaplains to give pastoral and spiritual care to their members. For example, there are chaplains at airports and in shopping malls, often with places set apart for prayer or reflection. There are chaplains in industry, in the world of entertainment, even in football clubs. They

must be meeting a perceived need.

In England, chaplains originate from medieval times when they were first engaged by monarchs and noble families. Often chaplains served as clerks – not all noblemen were literate (hence 'clerk in holy orders'). Chaplains were also paid to say masses for the souls of their patrons, in the hope of gaining favour in heaven. Often chaplains would accompany their lord into battle, on land or sea – the original armed forces chaplains.

So what is the appeal of chaplain-

cies today? Perhaps it is a natural development in a secular society. In an age when fewer people attend churches it makes particular sense for Christian ministers to join people where they are, offering pastoral and spiritual care to specific groups of people. Jesus himself was without any kind of institution; he had no synagogue or church building. Jesus was on the road, in people's homes, at the lakeside, on the hillside, engaging people where they were – Pharisees, tax collectors, beggars, prostitutes, the sick and dying, foreigners
turn to page 11

What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were, we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol: 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as their worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because he was King of the Jews, with frankincense because he was to be worshipped as divine; and with myrrh, because he would also become a sacrifice and die for his people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled

for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, his divinity or his sacrificial death. They worshipped him through faith in God's promises about him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

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On the importance of NOT keeping accurate minutes

The Rectory
St. James the Least

My dear Nephew Darren

Since you were the one to ask this parishioner of yours to act as secretary, you have no reason to complain about the minutes of meetings she produces. You should never let anyone act as a secretary unless they either cannot speak English, or are deaf – preferably both. The more significant the committee and the more contentious the issues being debated, the more you should nobly put yourself forward both to chair the meeting and take the minutes. In the majority of cases, that will spare the other members that awkward moment when you ask for a volunteer and they all feel the need to stare at their feet.

If you act as secretary, then you can be certain that accounts of what took place will only be what you had wanted to happen and that the decisions taken will be what you had already decided before discussions started. Any inconvenient observations from other committee members can be omitted entirely.

Admittedly, the more observant may notice that your accounts of the meeting may not wholly agree with their recollections, but the skill of being a secretary is not to produce the minutes of the previous meeting until the day before the next one. This will mean that the great majority will have long forgotten what actually did happen two months previously and that many will not have had the time to read them anyway and will

avoid having to admit that fact by passing them.

Only the deeply committed will want to pursue apparent discrepancies. In that case, confess to the meeting that your hand-written notes were accidentally left on a bus and so you can no longer check the accuracy of what you have written. As a way of appearing helpful, you could even give the person challenging you the bus route number and time of day you travelled – but make sure that that route has subsequently been discontinued. Further challenges will rally the rest of the committee to your side and someone will oil the wheels by suggesting you proceed to the next item on the agenda. Since you are also the chairman, you naturally bow to their request.

Just in the way that church rotas bear no resemblance to the people who actually turn up to do the jobs, minutes of meetings need not bear too much resemblance to what actually happened – especially if what did happen is inconvenient.

Democracy is all very well - provided a benign dictator is in overall control.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

In place of cabbage

A woman confided in her pries that when she sent her husband to buy a cabbage for lunch, he had fallen and broken his leg. "That's terrible!" said the priest. "What did you do?"

"I opened a can of peas", she replied.

Who buries your loved one?

A combination of dwindling state support and soaring funeral costs is leaving hard-pressed families dependent on the council to bury their loved ones, according to a recent report in *The Guardian* newspaper. It seems that funeral poverty is an unexpectedly potent indicator of the combined impact of recession, austerity, low wages and the insecure job market.

The insurance company Sun Life Direct says funeral poverty has risen by 125% since 2010 – a figure it calculates by assessing the shortfall between the cost of funerals and people's ability to pay. Around one in seven people struggle to pay funeral costs – with the average cost of a basic funeral around £3,590, according to the company's research.

TWO FACES OF WAR ± the horrors of 1915

In the run-up to the Christmas season Sainsbury's produced an exceptional commercial. It was very long - nearly four minutes, an eternity in television terms. It was beautifully filmed and produced. It got people talking - several hundred people complained about it, but millions watched it spell-bound. One distinguished TV critic described it as the most moving piece of television of the year.

In case you missed it - presumably you would have been out of the country - it recreated an actual incident from Christmas Day 1914, when British and German soldiers gathered in no-man's land for a game of football and then joined in singing carols together - 'Silent Night' or 'Heilige Nacht' according to nationality. When it was over, they shook hands, wished each other concluded on page 11 col2

Remembering Sir Winston Churchill ± more than an eloquent voice

Fifty years ago, on 24th January, Sir Winston Spencer Churchill died aged ninety. He was buried at Bladon church, near Blenheim Palace, the Spencer family seat. Every year hundreds of visitors still come to the grave, many of them from overseas, to remember a remarkable man and leader of men.

A soldier (in the Boer War), and then a controversial politician, he held several important offices of state, but it wasn't until 1940 that his unique gifts, both of leadership and oratory, became widely recognised. When Neville Chamberlain's government was replaced by a wartime coalition - a 'national government' - Churchill was appointed prime minister. From the first time he rose to his feet to address a tense and anxious House of Commons it was clear that a remarkable personality had assumed high office. At the end of his first wartime broadcast a few days later the whole nation knew that it had found its voice.

Churchill's wartime oratory was unique, both in its impact and its eloquence. Although showing no academic prowess at school, and without the advantages of a classical or university education, he revealed an absolute mastery of the rhythms and cadences of the English language.

That, allied to an uncanny appreciation of the public mood and the responses of the human heart, enabled him to evoke a unique response from the British people. Whether it was after Dunkirk, when invasion seemed imminent

- 'we will fight them on the beaches . . . we will never surrender', or in the aftermath of the Battle of Britain - 'never in all the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few' - his words breathed courage into a beleaguered nation.

He ended one long speech, which realistically set out the military position at the time, with words that have a Shakespearian ring to them: 'Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour"'

Many of my generation remember our parents or grandparents sitting spellbound around their wireless sets hanging on his every word. He was, quite simply, the voice of Britain, distinctive, eloquent, passionate, utterly committed to the national cause. If ever a sequence of speeches changed history, this was it.

He was precisely the right man for those potentially catastrophic days, urging the nation to 'blood, sweat, toil and tears', but promising in the end victory for justice and freedom. At the end of the War he counselled 'magnanimity in victory', and then, unexpectedly, lost a general election and never again achieved the heights of those wartime years, though he did return as prime minister for four years from 1951. None however can doubt his place as one of the greatest Englishmen of all time.

This is 'like a magic pill' to slow your ageing

Want to combat ageing and even help prevent an early death? It is easy - take a daily walk of about half an hour a day. According to recent research from the School of Life and Health Services at Aston University, a daily walk of half an hour can help prevent obesity and diabetes, lower the risk of some cancers, relieve depression and anxiety, increase mobility and reduce the chance of hip fracture by 40 percent among older people. That daily half hour walk will also improve your ability to think and to reason, slow the progression of dementia, cut arthritic pain, raise your energy levels, and reduce fatigue.

And the really good news is that "all these changes are not seen in people who run marathons. . . . people who lift weights in the gym, or spend four hours running on the treadmill. These are seen in people who simply walk, and who walk for half an hour a day." So says Dr James Brown of Aston University.

What's wrong with the car?

"The car won't start," said a wife to her husband. "I think there's water in the carburettor."

Her husband scoffed and pointed out that she did not even know what the carburettor was.

"I'm telling you," repeated the wife, "I'm sure there's water in the carburettor."

The husband was very dubious. "We'll see. Where's the car?"

"In the swimming pool."

Hymns and Readings

4th January Epiphany

Readings Isaiah 60: 1-6

Psalm 72

Ephesians 3: 1-12

Matthew 2: 1-12

Hymns 52 O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness

48 Bethlehem of noblest cities

We three kings of orient are

47 As with gladness

49 Brightest and best are the sons of the morning

Sidesperson: Janet O'Carroll

Readers: Stephen Nicoll, Nick Bethune

Intercessions Carol Kenning

11th January Baptism of Christ

Readings Genesis 1: 1-5

Psalm 29

Acts 19: 1-7

Mark 1: 4-11

Hymns 342 Breath on me breath of God

374 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds

55 Hail to the Lord's anointed

I the Lord of sea and sky

Sidesperson: Mark Williams

Readers: Rob Nesbitt, Ruth Godwin,

Intercessions: Lucy Boyd

(Samaritans and Roman Centurions). Chaplains are in the front line of Christian ministry and outreach in the 21st Century, meeting people at opportune moments, often in passing, as Jesus did.

It is appropriate in today's Britain that chaplains, both ordained and lay, often operate in multi-faith teams, each being true to their own traditions but seeing each other as colleagues rather than competitors.

Many see modern Britain as a post-faith society, but the growth of the ministry of chaplains suggests otherwise. Many people are searching for meaning and something or someone to believe in. People find themselves praying at important times in their lives, however vague their experience of God may be. Chaplains have unique opportunities to be alongside.

18th January Epiphany 2

Readings: 1 Samuel 3: 1-10

Psalm: 139

Revelation 5: 1-10

John 1: 43-end

Hymns 349 Come let us join our cheerful songs
Will you come and follow me

296 Lord enthroned in heaven splendour

475 Ye holy angels bright

Sidesperson: Bill Saunders

Readers: Carol Kenning, Jenny Kauntze,

Intercessions: Nicky Pittam

25th January Conversion of St Paul

Readings: Acts 9: 1-22

Psalm: 67

Galatians 1: 11-16a

Matthew 19: 27-end

Hymns 95 When I survey

Amazing grace

155 We sing the glorious conquest

379 In the cross of Christ I glory

Sidesperson: Elizabeth Oyedemi

Readers: Denise Sealy, Joe McKenzie

Intercessions: Ian MacGregor.

luck and went back to their trenches. The only 'commercial' element in it was that one of the British soldiers slipped a bar of chocolate into the pocket of a young German.

Then, of course, the next morning they were once again manning their guns or fixing their bayonets. It was a moment of peace, of a glorious shared humanity on the day when we remember that God in Jesus shared ours. But the insanity of war could not be cured by one moment of glorious sanity.

A few days later, on January 2nd, on the same front, the German army deployed deadly chlorine gas, the first time it had been used in warfare. 140 British soldiers were killed by it. Many others - among them my own father - were affected by it but not fatally. As an RAMC stretcher-bearer he cared for many of the men who were gassed - fortunately a breeze helped to disperse it.

Two stories within ten days sharply illustrate the two faces of war - and indeed the two faces of humanity. We are capable of great acts of humanity and also of great evil - not two different sets of people, but the same ones. No wonder we put a cross on soldiers' graves: the symbol of a great evil and, at the same time, of the 'greatest love'.

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For your prayers

PRAYER CALENDAR FOR MONTH OF JANUARY 2015

4th Laurier Road
12th Lissenden Gardens
18th Mortimer Terrace
25th Spencer Rise

SAINTS & HOLY DAYS

1st Circumcision of Christ
2nd St Basil the Great
4th **Epiphany**
11th **Baptism of Christ**
12th St. Aelred of Hexham

13th St Hilary of Poitiers
17th St Antony of Egypt
18th **Second Sunday of Epiphany**
19th St, Wulfstan of Worcester
21st St Agnes of Rome
24th St Francis de Sales
25th **Conversion of St Paul**
26th Ss Timothy and Titus
28th St. Thomas Aquinas
30th Charles King and Martyr
31st St John Bosco