

Today there are many people whose needs are like Mary's – the refugee fleeing danger or disaster, those working to support their families in desperately difficult circumstances, people giving birth without access to basic medical care.

This year Christian Aid is providing the opportunity for us to give to people who are confronting the kind of challenges which Mary faced, by buying gifts from the 'Present Aid' catalogue.

How does Present Aid work?

Each of the gifts in the catalogue represents an area of Christian Aid's work, such as providing livestock, training and education projects, emergency preparedness or healthcare. When you 'buy' a gift, the contribution you make supports the area of work that is symbolised by the gift. So, for instance, if you buy carpentry tools, your money will fund skills and training projects, while a gift of ducks will fund agriculture and livestock projects. You receive a card describing how your gift will be used and you send the card to the friend or family member for whom you have chosen the present.

Present Aid catalogues are available from the display stand in St Lawrence Church. Please take one and use it to give gifts that will not only give real pleasure to the friends you send them to, but will also make a lasting difference to the lives of people in the developing world.

Elspeth Cooke (01732 761766)

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Not Just a Name

Two Seal parish councillors have been attending a WEA course 'Not Just a Name' and have investigated the names on the war memorials in Seal parish.

An exhibition of their preliminary findings will shortly be presented at each church in Seal Parish and Seal Public Library. To find out further information please contact Colin Milligan on 01732 761809.

Marie Bloss

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8-12 Club Seal

A club for children between 8 and 12 years will be running 6 taster sessions, on a Monday, starting on 6 November. The club will be held at Seal Church Hall between 6 and 7:30 pm. Telephone 01732 763448 for an application form or further information. Enjoy meeting new friends and activities such as arts and crafts, swimming and hip hop dancing.

Affiliated to Kent Youth and with the benefit of grants from Seal Parish Council and West Kent Extra.

Marie Bloss

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From the Vicar

I have been musing on two of the festivals associated with November – Halloween (Eve of All Hallows) and Christ the King. The difference between them can literally be the difference between death and life!

When someone very dear to us dies it's a natural human mark of love to wonder where are they now, and whether all is really well. While we may acknowledge the truth of Jesus' words that those who believe in him already have eternal life, we may still worry over a particular loved one's faith – or indeed our own faith.. Was it, or is it, enough? Actually, as I understand it, faith is not measured on any normal yardstick – it is more about the direction a life was, or is, pointed towards. With the ambiguities present in most of us, we don't usually have the clear assurance we'd like for most of the people we know who have died.

To try to get specific answers, some people are tempted to – or do - turn to mediums or others who purport to be able to contact beyond the grave.

I was hearing the other day a recent story of just one such encounter. Apparently without any prior knowledge, the medium could give some concrete statement that so-and-so had been seen with a particular object which was what the dead person had always been hankering after while in this world. And the medium said they heard a "message" from the person who had died that not only did they now have all they had wanted but there was plenty more for everyone else. Do such "messages" prove there is an afterlife, and (more importantly) that our loved one is indeed well?

As a Christian I believe that though we may be told something we can recognise, it does **not** necessarily mean it is all true. For reasons our fallen human mind cannot understand, God has allowed evil to continue to exist. This force of evil has links beyond this world, has great spiritual powers –and a deceptive charm (seen at Halloween type parties, for example). In reality this evil (satan, the devil, or whatever other name is used), has a warped kind of personality which would do everything possible to mislead people away from the love of God shown in Jesus. One way evil does this is by deception, leading us ever so plausibly so far , giving us half-truths ... to the point that we are hooked. Messing with evil is a treacherously slippery slope – the only sure advice is "Don't even start!"

There is only one true mediator (medium) between us and eternity – Jesus himself (1 Timothy 2:5). He alone has the key to life and death – and it is his festival, Christ the King, which is celebrated gloriously on the last Sunday of this November.

With all blessings, Michael

Michael

PS If any reader has concerns about any of the above, or wants to discuss further, please do speak to me about it!

Sevenoaks Area Youth Trust - Fundraising

Thanks to wonderful support from several parishioners we have been able to exceed our target of £1500 which the parish has committed to contribute to SAYT this year.

Fundraising events included coffee mornings, a bridge evening, a mothers' and children's barbeque and cream teas. Many thanks to every one who contributed to this excellent result.

We have agreed to pay a similar amount to the Trust next year so your continued efforts to organise small scale events will still be important in 2007.
John Morris

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The Cantate Choir

This Sevenoaks-based chamber choir, of which I am a member, is staging a concert for Armistice Day on November 11 at St Mary's Church, Kippington Road, Sevenoaks at 7.30pm. The concert will comprise music and readings on the theme of recollection and remembrance. Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man* will be the major work as well as Barber's *Agnus Dei* (better known as his *Adagio for Strings*), Vaughan Williams' arrangement of *Greensleeves* and Elgar's *Nimrod* played by our guest organist.

Poems by Wilfred Owen, Christina Rossetti and Tennyson will be read by local actors.

If you are interested in attending but would prefer not to drive please let me know and we can arrange transport.

Tickets (£10 to include a post-concert drink) are available from me on 01732 810227 or from Sevenoaks Bookshop, 147 High Street, Sevenoaks. *John Morris*

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St Lawrence Fun Day

The Fun Day fulfilled all expectations as a fun and enjoyable afternoon for the children of the Sunday school and parish. There were twenty-two children ranging from the age of 4 to 11, and the activities they participated in were designed to suit all ages. The children made crow puppets out of paper by drawing round templates and gluing on eyes and feathers. They also made apple pigs, with sweets and cocktail sticks, and autumn gardens, which gave the children an opportunity to be very creative gardeners. Finally they made heatproof mats by painting and drawing on tiles, which were extremely successful and looked very professional at the end. The parachute games were also very popular amongst both children and helpers, particularly the shark game, where one child went underneath and grabbed people's toes. Tallulah Mee, aged 9

Remembering those who have died and are dear to us

For the last nine years a service has been held within our parishes on 2nd November when those who so care can remember in a formal way by prayer and with a lit candle those who are dear to them and who have died. This year, as a change, the service will not include Holy Communion and we hope everyone will feel very much part of our extended church family.

This year, the service for both our parishes will be held at St Lawrence's at **8 pm on Thursday 2nd November**, and will be led by Gretel Wakeham. If possible – but not essential - please do let her or Michael know beforehand names you'd like to have remembered during the service.

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Completion of (Re)Building Works at St Lawrence's

As I write (mid-October) it looks as if the works following the fire in May 2005, and the extra works agreed to by the PCC may indeed be complete by the end of November 2006. If this progress is still on schedule by mid-November then we will plan for a major celebratory "Completion and reopening" service to be held on **Sunday 10th December** –we'd want it to be separate from our Christmas celebrations later in the month. We will be sending out invitations to all those who have been part of our journey to get the church reinstated – including the many contractors, our insurance company, diocese, and of course friends from near and far who have written and acted in support. Please pencil this date in your diary now, and watch out for an appropriate announcement on our Noticeboard and/or letter!

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The Greatest Gift

Although it is only November, are you beginning to think about Christmas presents? However hard we search inside our Christmas stockings, we won't find the essence of Christmas. We can't find the true meaning of the season under a Christmas tree. In fact, we may find that the layers of wrapping paper make 'finding' Christmas even harder. But giving gifts is at the centre of our Christmas celebration. Present-buying may have become tangled up in consumerism, but that doesn't mean that we can't enjoy being able to give to each other out of love. After all, God loves to give good gifts: *'If you then know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!'* *Matthew 7:11*

What would Mary have wanted as a gift that first Christmas? Perhaps a shelter, or a midwife to help her safely through the birth. Maybe even a secure income for Joseph, so he could support his family.

home to the nativity figures of Mary and Joseph for a night. This symbolises making room for Jesus in our lives, homes and communities and encourages people to think about the meaning of Christmas.

Each night from the fourth Sunday before Christmas the figures travel around the community from place to place arriving in Church on Christmas Eve in time to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

What is involved?

If you would like to 'host' Mary and Joseph for a night, all you need to do is sign up on the list which you will find in St Lawrence Church or phone St Lawrence Vicarage on 01732 761766. A journey rota will be worked out and arrangements made for transferring the nativity figures from one home to the next at a time to suit both of you.

For the evening you 'host' Mary & Joseph you can choose to do what ever you like. Why not invite friends and family to sing carols? There is a simple ceremony which you can use when the Posada figures arrive at their new home for the night.

The next day you need to take Mary and Joseph to the next hosts on the list. It's as simple as that.

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Church Army

As the Church Army has developed the resources which we shall be using, there will be an opportunity to contribute to the work of the Church Army as the Posada figures move round the parish.

Please make sure you have added your details on the Journey Rota by **Sunday 19th November**. If you have any queries, please phone me.

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A SPECIAL CHURCH CLEAN

We need extra helpers, please, after completion of the professional cleaning to ensure that our newly renovated church is sparkling, for what will hopefully be a Grand Re-opening Service on Sunday 10 December (if the builders keep to schedule).

on

FRIDAY 1st DECEMBER 2006 0900 - 1100

Coffee and Mince Pies Afterwards!!!

Carol McL

said "I wish it had been longer" and John Rayner, aged 9 agreed saying it was a brilliant day. Thank you very much to all the children and helpers, and particularly to Elspeth Cooke for making the day such a success. *Joanna Rayner*

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News from our Sunday School

On 15 October we read the Parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke 10:25-37, where Jesus told of a kind stranger from Samaria who risked his life to help a Jewish man who had been attacked. The children were taught that a parable was an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. Jesus based the parables on the daily life of Palestine – these included farmers, fishermen, housewives and merchants. The people would recognise the situations Jesus talked about and this helped them understand. Jesus taught about God and how people could go to heaven by caring for each other. The children gave the names of some of the parables and understood their meaning. After answering some questions following the parable, they were asked to name ways they could help other people and how God helps them and always to remember that we are to be kind to everyone. Activities included colouring a picture of the Jewish man who was travelling on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and subsequently attacked by robbers. The children, whilst blindfolded, then stuck the picture of the man on a picture of a donkey. They also coloured a picture from the story and started to draw their nativity picture for the parish Christmas card. *Celeste and Helen*

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Harvest Supper 2006.

The Harvest Supper this year took place during the evening of Saturday 30 September at Stone Street village hall.

The hall was presented beautifully with tables neatly laid, and the stage was decorated with Gourds. Tea lights flickered around the hall creating the wonderful warm glow of harvest.

Guests were welcomed by Michael Cooke, and the choir began the evening by singing Goin' Up - a spiritual.

Diners were treated to a medley of Shepherd's Pies, followed by an astounding array of hot puddings, topped off with cheese and biscuits, after which coffee and chocolates were available for anyone who could manage it ! Local apples and cob nuts were also presented.

During the supper, a general knowledge quiz kept everyone amused, as frantic scribbling and confused expressions swept through the room. Being a Church event, the participants of the quiz were of course completely above board and honest in their pursuit of perfect scores. Well, most of them were anyway!

As the evening progressed, the choir sang a wonderful Gaelic Blessing to music by Margaret Rizza. Tom Hordle and Johnnie Rayner received a standing ovation for playing the Skaters Waltz, and the singing concluded with the much loved (inevitable some might say) 'Bringing in the Sheaves' with everyone joining in the chorus.

The evening was attended by about seventy or so, and all money raised will be donated to the Farm Africa Appeal, which seems a very appropriate cause to support at this time, as we celebrate our harvest, and remember those whose harvest may not be as bountiful.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those who very kindly helped to organise the evening, giving up much of their own time to help, and of course thank those who attended, helping to support this worthy cause.

WELL DONE EVERYONE.

Ron Drury

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News from our School

It seems unbelievable that we are already nearly six weeks into the new school year. The children are all working very hard and there is a very purposeful atmosphere around the school. We have welcomed several new families into our school community and we hope that they already feel very much at home. The integration of the new children has been helped by our recently introduced 'buddy system' in which a year 6 child (10/11 year old) is paired up with a reception child. The older children are taking their responsibility very seriously and the parents of the new children have told me how much this has helped their children's first few weeks at school.

A significant event of the early part of this month was our Harvest Celebration. This year we were extremely lucky to have a wonderful singer from the Mill Lane Gospel Choir who came and performed 'Song for Africa' along with the children of St Lawrence. You may read publicity about this song; it has been written by a talented local song writer and released on CD with all proceeds going to the charity HOPEHIV (www.hopehive.org). It was a tremendously exciting occasion and all the children bought a CD, raising a total of nearly £150 for the charity which supports orphaned children in Africa.

As a school we are very committed to the education of the whole child and our extra curricular activities play a very important part in broadening the opportunities that the children have available to them. I am delighted with the large variety of school clubs which we have been able to offer this term, fifteen in all, including netball, ICT, horse riding, recorders and orchestra. A more unusual club is our 'multi-skills club' which is run by our oldest children for our youngest children - they spend a lunchtime practicing skipping, jumping, throwing and catching a ball and other very important physical skills. Both old and young learn

from it.

As always, we are keen to put the name of St. Lawrence School firmly on the map and I am aware that it is the time of year when parents begin to think about which school they are going to send their children to next September. If you find yourself talking to an undecided parent I would encourage you to mention us. I firmly believe that with our small classes, beautiful surroundings and a combination of modern technology and traditional values, we can offer an excellent education. Anyone who is interested in seeing us should phone the school office (01732 761393) and I would love to have the opportunity to show them around.

Alison

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From the Registers

16 October Burial of the late Ernest Frederick Oben, who had died aged 83 in Tunbridge Wells. We offer our deepest sympathy to the Oben and Bascom families.

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A message from The Headteacher, Children, Staff and Governors of
St Lawrence School

A BIG THANK YOU

to everyone who supported us in our battle to keep our school. We really appreciated the letters written, the prayers prayed and the words of encouragement and support. They all made a tremendous difference and together we WON!

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Posada – Will you give a home to Mary and Joseph?

This year, St Lawrence's is planning to have a Posada in the parish. We hope that many households in the community will want to take part.

What is Posada?

Posada is a Spanish word meaning 'inn'. Posada celebrations originated in Mexico where two young people were chosen to dress up as Mary and Joseph. They used to travel from house to house in their village telling people about the imminent arrival of Jesus and asking them if they would give Him a room. On Christmas Eve they would re-enact a community play and bring figures of Mary and Joseph to be placed in a crib.

The modern day equivalent is based on this concept but invites people to give a