

# St Thomas', Trowbridge & St John's, West Ashton

December 2011, January 2012  
Monthly News



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*Allan  
and the Staff Team  
wish you all*

*A Very Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy and Healthy New Year*



## BIRTH PAINS!

(From a sermon preached at St Thomas' on Advent Sunday 27/11/11)

I've only ever been present at one birth... and that was a long time ago so I have little memory of the event! However, I am led to understand that giving birth is sometimes an uncomfortable, arduous and messy business! Furthermore, there is a stage of labour known as 'transition' which is when things begin to get really serious. That's where I think we are – personally, locally, nationally and worldwide. The expression of Christianity all over the world is undergoing massive changes and we are not exempt from those in our corner of Wiltshire. God is doing new things in our churches and in the Trowbridge area as a whole and it is not at all surprising that are experiencing some stretching, pangs of discomfort and exhaustion as a result.

Paul likened his anxiety, as he watched young churches he had planted face challenges and make mistakes, to birth pains.

*“My dear children, for whom I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you...”* (Galatians 4:19)

Reading on in the Chapter, he contrasts Abraham's two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. One was born as a result of human effort and striving to accomplish God's plan 'according to our own lights'; the other simply through trust in God's promise. The latter became the forefather of the nation of Israel and the means through which God's blessing (and ultimately, our Saviour) came to the human race. We need to constantly check that we have not slipped into trying to bring about God's promise through our own means, or if our motto remains 'God's will, in God's way and God's timing'.

Returning to the analogy of the pain we experience as God brings new things to birth in and around us, it is important to recognise that this is a process which we have to stick with even when it gets uncomfortable. (A woman in labour has little choice!) In fact, we are changed by the process into the people we need to be for the next stage of our journey.

There is a faith element here, because we don't know exactly what we are giving birth to (just as parents don't always know the sex, size, appearance or aptitudes of the baby they will have), we just know it will be good!

It is also advisable to give one another lots of grace during such times. A new father who makes a less than tactful remark at the height of labour will be wise to make allowances for his wife if she replies in a tone of voice and with a certain 'shortness' that at other times he might find quite offensive! Likewise we will be wise to make allowances, rather than assumptions, about one another's words and motives and always assume the best at such times.

Natural childbirth works best (I am told!) when you work with nature's rhythm of periods of intense, concentrated effort during the contractions, interspersed with conscious relaxation between. It's a matter of pacing oneself, taking the long view, and being in it 'for as long as it takes'. Mothers are encouraged to focus on the task in hand and try to screen out all distractions. Often this will mean concentrating on the face and voice of a birth coach or mentor. As we give birth to God's plans, we will need to be focussed on his presence and promises above all else. But we also need to build in deliberate rest periods so that we do not burn out and are able to sustain effort over the long haul.

Is it all worth it – especially at times when the process feels like a long, hard, uncomfortable ride? Let the Lord Jesus answer that one for us...

*“A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world.”* (John 16:21)

May that joy be in all of you this Christmastide and as we journey on through the 'birthing' process together.

Allan Coutts



Come And Experience

**"THE FLAVOUR OF CHRISTMAS"**

In ST JOHN'S CHURCH, WEST ASHTON

On FRIDAY, 9 DECEMBER, 2011

7.30 pm

The Concert Will Be Lead By The

Westbury Choral Society

With Readings; Instrumentals And

Audience Participation

Tickets : £4.00

(To Include Mulled Wine & Mince Pie)

Available From :

Jo Watkins 753196 & Sylvia Preston 765858

(Children Under 14 Free)

Proceeds Towards Church Funds.



**Grace to keep Going**

*He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. And so we boast of the hope we have of sharing God's glory!*

*Romans 5 verse 2*

As Christians we readily confess that our salvation is because of God's Grace. But what does "this grace in which we stand" mean to us now. How does this work in everyday life, especially when we go through some tough times of trial and suffering. God's grace could be defined as His provision for us at the point of our need. The problem is that sometimes we don't seem to believe the need is provided for in the way we expect. God frequently will see the deficiencies, outcomes and complications that we don't. His goal for us involves spiritual growth and the development of a Christlike character.

- The Lord's grace releases His supernatural power within us so we can endure life's hardships with a Godly attitude.
- Grace builds our confidence in the sovereign Lord. Nothing looks hopeless when we focus on Him instead of on our problems.
- We discover the assurance of God's sustaining presence as He walks with us every step of the way.
- Because we've experienced His care for us, we are able to show empathy and love to others facing hard times or tough challenges.
- During fiery trials, grace works to transform our character so that others can see Jesus reflected in us.

Difficulties, differences of opinion and misunderstandings are unavoidable. After all we are humans born with a slight but existing imperfection. If we rely on our own strength and our own mind, obstacles will seem insurmountable and regrets often follow in the way we react. As believers we need our daily dose of grace. I remember the trendy bracelets some have chosen to wear with WWJD written on it, What Would Jesus Do? This I find is the best question we can ask ourselves when we are faced with challenges and trials in any shape or form.

The Christmas season is often very busy and can be a stressful time for people. So much to do and so little time .... Perhaps this Christmas time as we reflect on God's Grace by bringing salvation into the world we can be encouraged to focus on the Grace that God has given us. Let us then use this same Grace in time ahead and the year to come in our personal walk and growth in the Lord.

Allow me to leave you with one of my favourite verses:

*May God the Father and Jesus Christ, the Father's Son, give us grace, mercy, and peace; may they be ours in truth and love.*

*2 John 1 verse 3*

Be Blessed

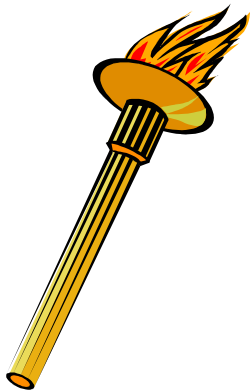
Marco

## TROWBRIDGE CHURCHES WELCOME THE OLYMPICS


CATA hopes to mark the Olympics year by organising some special events. It has set up a small group to collect together ideas and to form teams of people to help organise them. If you would like to get involved with this idea would you please let Brian Wade have your ideas and/or offers of help fairly soon?

Ideas being considered so far include a Family Fun Day in Trowbridge Park on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> July and taster sports sessions. The Fun Day might include a parade of youth organisations, bouncy castles, face painting, puppets, prayer tent, five-a-side football or penalty shoot-out competitions and other sports(?), free burgers and anything else you can suggest! We hope to have music groups playing on the bandstand and the event could merge into an evangelistic event later in the afternoon or early evening. Subject to demand we are also thinking of setting up a very large TV screen during the actual Olympics so that people can come together to watch some of the major events – would you come?

Every idea is welcome at this planning stage so do please give yours to Brian. And, of course, we will need to get a team of people together to organise everything - could this be a project for you in 2012?



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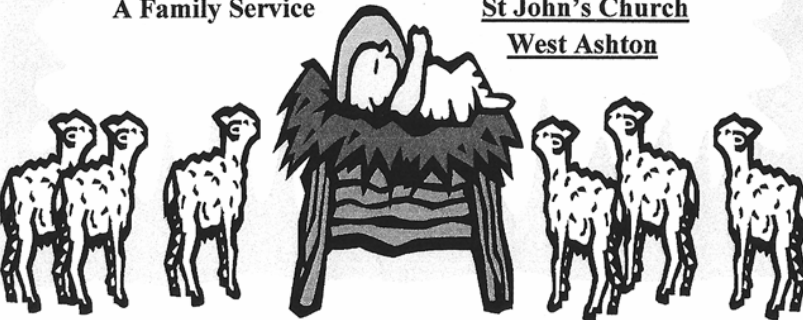
  
*St John's Parish Church, West Ashton*  
*Warmly Invite You To Rejoice In The*  
*Following Christmas Services:*

Experience the magic of the candlelit  
**Christingle Service**  
Sunday, 4 December, 2011 at 4.00 pm

Commemorate Our Saviour's Birth and Join Us For  
**St John's Carols & Readings**  
Sunday 18 December, 2011 at 10.30 am

**Celebrate Midnight Communion**  
Saturday, 24 December, 2011 at 11.15 pm

**The Miracle Birth Of Jesus ~ Christmas Day**  
Sunday 25 December, 2011 at 10.30 am  
A Family Service St John's Church  
West Ashton



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# COME AND JOIN US

at

*ST JOHN'S CHURCH  
WEST ASHTON*

*CHRISTINGLE SERVICE*

**SUNDAY, 4<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER, 2011**  
*4.00 pm*

## The Symbolism of Christingle

The Christingle itself is made up of a lighted candle (symbolising Jesus, the Light of the World), mounted on an orange (representing the world), and a red ribbon or tape around the orange (indicating the blood of Christ). Four cocktail sticks bearing dried fruit or sweets are also stuck into the orange to signify the four seasons and the fruits of the earth.



The history of Christingle began with the Moravian Church in 1747, as a symbol of Christ's light and love. The Children's Society introduced it to the Church of England in 1968 and it has since become a popular family and community event. Most Christingle celebrations take the form of a church service, but they can also take place at schools or other community venues.