

The Church in Great Notley

All ages welcome
Come and join us as we praise God together



December 08 - Feb 09

We are five denominations working together:
Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Roman Catholic
and United Reformed Church

Minister

Rev. Mike Shrubsole ph. 01376 564880
e-mail m.shrubsole@virgin.net
www.greatnotleychurch.org.uk

Mission statement

The aim of this church is:-
*To show the love of Jesus in word and action
so that others may come to know him as Lord and Saviour.*

Sunday Services for Dec 08-Feb 09
(In the Community Centre)

All are welcome to our Sunday morning services at **10.30am**. **Holy Communion** (HC) is on the 2nd Sunday of each month, and we have **All Age Worship** (AAW) on the 4th Sunday.

Dec	7	10.30am	Roger Cook
	6.00pm	Rev. Mike Shrubsole	
		<i>Advent & Christmas readings and meditations</i>	
	14	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole HC
3.30pm	21	10.30 am	No service
		Family Carol Service	
	28	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole AAW
Jan	4	10.30am	Anglican
		6.00pm	Rev. Mike Shrubsole
		<i>A communion service for the New year</i>	
	11	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole HC
	18	10.30am	David Drewett
	25	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole AAW
Feb	1	10.30am	Anglican
		6.00pm	Rev. Mike Shrubsole
		<i>A Northumbria Community Evening Prayer Service</i>	
	8	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole HC
	15	10.30am	Marian Rollins
	22	10.30am	Rev. Mike Shrubsole AAW

Letter from our Minister, Rev Mike Shrubsole

Dear Friends

As I looked at the lectionary gospel reading for this Sunday (2nd November - Matthew 23:1-12) I was reminded of the way I usually chose to introduce my 'Minister's Letters'. Jesus warns against having inappropriate expectations that we should receive honour or deference from one another. He warns the spiritual leaders of his day that they should not expect to be called 'master' or 'father' or 'teacher'. He later shows by example his better way, at the last supper at the end of John's gospel when Jesus tells his disciples: 'I have called you 'Friends.'" (John 15:15) This is how the 'Quakers' or 'Society of Friends' have traditionally addressed one another. It seems an appropriate way to start my letter in each magazine.

In this magazine you can find some information from me about the current situation with regard to progress made towards starting our new church building; there is also some news about the Black Notley Parish link. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the magazine.

I would like to end this letter with a seasonal message from the Shrubsoles:

Christmas Greetings
Our God, heav'n cannot hold him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:
In the bleak mid-winter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

Christina Rossetti

May the humble and hidden child be revealed
as your light and life and Lord this Christmas. Amen.

To all our 'Friends', from *Mike, Louise, Andrew and Christopher Shrubsole.*

Quiet Meditation Sunday Evenings

We have begun to book the Small Hall at the Notley Green Community Centre on the first Sunday of every month at 6.00pm, for a series of short, simple acts of worship. They will usually be led by our Minister, Revd Mike Shrubsole; they may sometimes involve singing, they may sometimes include a time of sharing bread and wine round the communion table, we may spend some time in prayer or in silence. These times of worship could be quite varied in content, but they will suit the quieter, prayerful and more reflective mood of a Sunday evening.

Do come and join us on:

December 7th

- Advent and Christmas Readings and Meditations

January 4th

- A Communion Service for the New Year

February 1st - A Northumbria Community Evening Prayer Service

- Evening Prayer Service

SIGNS SEEN OUTSIDE CHURCHES...

**“Come in and pray today.
Beat the Christmas rush!”**

Black Notley Link

Our church is an ecumenical one with four partner denominations offering support and guidance to the local church. One of those partners, the Church of England, has now decided that the time is right to offer to provide ministerial input to the church.

This new opportunity has partly arisen due to the ministerial vacancy at nearby Black Notley. The Church of England has organised its ecclesiastical parishes so that the villages of Great Notley and Black Notley are two halves of one church parish.

The Church of England would now like to appoint a new Rector who would have an equal role in both village churches. The outcome of this for the Church in Great Notley will be a ministry team of two ministers: a half-time United Reformed Church minister (currently the Revd Mike Shrubsole) and a half-time Church of England minister (to be appointed). In the future, the ministry provision by each of the four partner denominations will continue to adjust occasionally as different ministry needs are discerned and answered.

In order to prepare for the new addition of Church of England ministry, a fresh Church Profile describing the two churches and their needs has had to be prepared. We have now submitted a completed document to the Bishop, ready for distribution to applicants when the vacant post is advertised in the near future. If you would like to see a copy, please ask the Minister or Church Secretary for the loan of a printed version.

We are currently waiting for the news that approval to advertise this new post has been given. One matter which may be holding things up is the need to provide a new Rectory for the incoming person. The old Rectory at Black Notley is being sold & it is hoped that the diocese will be able to buy a new home to use as a Rectory as soon as possible. (M.S.)

Beatitudes for Relationships

Blessed are those who can laugh at themselves:
They will have no end of fun.

Blessed are those who can tell a mountain from a molehill;
They will be saved a lot of bother.

Blessed are those who know how to relax without looking for excuses:
They are on their way to becoming wise.

Blessed are those who know when to be quiet and listen:
They will learn a lot of new things.

Blessed are those who are sane enough not to take themselves seriously:
They will be valued by those about them.

Happy are you if you take small things seriously and face serious things calmly:
You will go far in life.

Happy are you if you can appreciate a smile and forget a frown:
You will walk on the sunny side of the street.

Happy are you if you can be kind in understanding the attitudes of others:
You will achieve clarity.

Blessed are those who think before they act and pray before they think:
They will avoid many blunders.

Happy are you if you know how to hold your tongue & smile:
Peace has begun to seep into your soul.

Author unknown

Christmas Services

6.00pm, Sunday 7th December - Christmas Readings

We meet in the Small Hall at Notley Green Community Centre. A quiet and reflective service of readings and meditations for the Advent season to help us in our spiritual longing as we approach Christmas.

6.00pm, Friday 19th December - Carol Singing

Come and join the singers outside Tesco as we sing familiar carols for the shoppers and raise money for our charitable causes.

3.30pm, Sunday 21st December - Family Carol Service

At Notley Green Community Centre. A carol service for all the family, young and old, traditional carols, new songs, readings, and nativity scene, to be followed by mince pies and refreshments.

10.30am, Thursday 25th December - Christmas Day

We are not organising worship in Great Notley, but you are invited to attend worship at Christ Church, Coggeshall, led by our Minister, Revd Mike Shrubsole, or we are sure you would receive a warm welcome at Black Notley parish church or at any Braintree church. Do try to make time to draw near and worship the Christ-child who is at the heart of every Christmas.

Christmas Charities

Our Carol Singing outside Tesco on Friday the 19th will collect funds to be divided between **Essex Air Ambulance and the Church in Great Notley Building Fund**. Essex Air Ambulance needs £2,000 for every flight they make. Our building funds still need about £100,000 extra for the building to open free of debt.

For our Carol Service on Sunday 21st December, our special charity will be **Save the Children**. This is also one of BBC Blue Peter's winter charities for 2008. Given the recent bad news from the Congo, it is good to know that Save the Children is already active in this part of the world.

Church Building News

Early in 2008 we announced that we were in a financial position where we could for the first time, after ten years of fund raising, afford the cost of building the new church. This position was reached because of the possibility of accepting a generous offer of an interest-free loan of £75,000. It still meant that we had to keep on fundraising to repay the loan, but it meant we could afford to start building.

Because we could see that we were close at the end of 2007 we commissioned the production of working drawings by the architect, which gave our contractors, TJ Evers, the opportunity to add some more detail into the costs of some items on tender document. This new detail still showed that we were very close to being able to afford the building.

This triggered the need for a legal document called the Sharing Agreement to be produced. The Sharing Agreement is produced by the partner denominations who have agreed to jointly sponsor a new church building. In our case, as you should be aware, we have four partners - Anglican, Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed. (We also had to discuss the special situation of having Roman Catholics as associate partners.) The four partner denominations need to engage church solicitors to agree that the terms of the Sharing Agreement are correct from each of their different perspectives and from the point of view of the local church as well. The document mainly sets out what their initial financial contributions to the partnership have been; what their ongoing liability to support the partnership will be; how management issues, particularly concerning new building work and future changes in use of the building will be dealt with; and ultimately, how to bring the partnership and the building to a close if in the fullness of time it is of no further use to the partnership. The denominational solicitors are now looking at draft two of the Sharing Agreement. It is a very lengthy and frustrating business waiting to hear if four different sets of legal people in four different parts of the country are in agreement over the wording of the document.

(continued on next page.....)

Church Building News

This has now taken most of 2008 and no final document has yet been agreed. With a complete Sharing Agreement we should be in a position to fairly quickly authorise a start to building work.

The time has not been wasted in other ways though. Because even if we had a signed Sharing Agreement today, we would not be able to start work tomorrow! We have still been completing work on the design details of the building. The church Building Committee has been regularly meeting and gradually agreeing certain details such as the landscaping plan for the outside; the requirements for the audio and visual systems for the building; the specification required for interior decoration; provision for an outside parish clock etc. Some work on design matters is still not complete. For example, we have not yet agreed the kitchen content and layout; we have not finalised the specification for the folding screen walls that separate up the three zones of the church building. Having a completed Sharing Agreement would certainly add a sense of urgency to complete the design details!

Although we have an agreed Tender document and price, it does contain a number of 'Provisional Sums'. Provisional sums occur where we have not yet agreed with the contractor enough detail to enable the tender price to be firmly fixed. It could be that some of these sums will go up if we agree expensive details. It could be that some of the sums will go down if we agree on simple answers, or even omit some work. We are fairly confident that the final tender price that we are working towards and will sign a contract for, will be very close to the current price.

The 'Credit Crunch' does affect this. The building trades are having a hard time & prices are being trimmed very finely at the moment. So, there is even some prospect that prices will come down by the time we actually sign the contract. The Building Committee has also discussed some possible omissions and reductions in cost that could still make the project affordable even if other costs go up a little. So overall, we are confident that this building could go up some time very soon. Keep praying with us! (M.S.)

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

*Good King Wenceslas looked out,
On the feast of Stephen*

The feast of Stephen is 26th December, when we remember the first Christian martyr. You can read his story in Acts chapters 6 and 7. But who was Wenceslas?

In the year 907 a child was born to Drahomira and her husband Vratislav, Duke of Bohemia who was a Christian. She, however, came from a pagan tribe and although she was baptised on her marriage she was still a pagan at heart. When the child, Wenceslas, was 13 his father died and he was raised by his grandmother, Ludmilla, who raised him as a Christian and acted as Regent until he came of age. However his mother resented this and had Ludmilla murdered, taking control of the country. She tried to convert her son back to pagan ways without success. In 924 he took control and had his mother exiled. He became known as a kind and generous ruler and the carol tells of one of his kindly acts. His picture was stamped on Bohemian coins and his crown became the symbol of Czech independence.

But in 929 (or 935) his brother conceived a plot against him. He invited him to a feast and had him murdered by three of his henchmen. Due to his martyr's death Wenceslas was made a Saint. His name in the Czech language is Vaclav and he became the patron saint of his country. The legend says that his faithful servant sought out the murderer and killed him - for this he was executed. Could he have been the page in the carol?

In 1853, John Mason Neale chose Wenceslas as the subject for a children's song as an example of Christian generosity. It tells us that the King's page was troubled by the fierce storm that was raging and was told to walk in the king's footsteps. 'In his master's steps he trod where the snow lay dinted' and so the song encourages us to tread in the steps of our Master, Jesus.

The song is set to a spring carol tune found in a Swedish collection published in 1582.

I.T Supremacy

Jesus and Satan were having an on-going argument about who was better on the computer. They had been going at it for days and, frankly, God was tired of hearing all the bickering. Finally fed up, God said, 'THAT'S IT! I have had enough. I am going to set up a test that will run for two hours, and from those results, I will judge who does the better job.'

So Satan and Jesus sat down at the keyboards and typed away.

They moused.

They faxed.

They e-mailed. They e-mailed with attachments.

They downloaded. They did spreadsheets!

They wrote reports. They created labels and cards.

They created charts and graphs.

They did some genealogy reports

They did every job known to man.

Jesus worked with heavenly efficiency and Satan was faster than hell. Then, ten minutes before their time was up, lightening suddenly flashed across the sky, thunder rolled, rain poured, and, of course, the power went off. Satan stared at his blank screen and screamed every curse word known in the underworld. Jesus just sighed.

Finally, the electricity came back on, and each of them restarted their computers. Satan started searching frantically, screaming: 'It's gone! It's all GONE! I lost everything when the power went out!'

Meanwhile, Jesus quietly started printing out all of his files from the past two hours of work. Satan observed this and became irate. 'Wait!' he screamed. 'That's not fair! He cheated! How come he has all his work and I don't have any?'

God just shrugged and said, 'JESUS SAVES'.....

The Church In Great Notley Accounts Summary

MONTH	RECEIPTS	PAYMENTS
February	1068.76	1281.53
March	1248.04	1398.13
April	1037.28	1467.09
May	1020.90	1521.36
June	4013.59*	1351.06
July	1350.35	1512.22
August	1616.13	1095.49
September	1004.86	2061.30
	12359.82	11688.18

*includes over £2800 Gift Aid

The monthly figures show that for most months our income (= your giving) is less than the church's necessary payments for each month. The main exception to this is the month of June when we received our Gift Aid reclaim payment from the tax people. This shows the importance of everyone using Gift Aid if at all possible to add to the value of their giving to the church. We received a generous Gift Aid payment this year because it covered 14 month's reclaims at the old basic rate of income tax. Next year our reclaim will only be for 10 months at the new basic rate of income tax; so it is likely to be quite a bit less. If things continue as they are we may not quite cover our costs for 2008, and the outlook for 2009 seems bleaker.

But what actually will happen is in your hands. May I ask you all to think prayerfully about your giving to the church. I accept it is difficult in these straitened times, especially if you are on a relatively low fixed income. Please also keep up your envelope giving, saving up the envelopes if you are away from services for any reason. If envelope money is diverted to another cause, this obviously reduces our ability to plan to cover costs.

Thank you everyone for all that you do; may God bless you all.

John Spouge
Church Treasurer

Junior Church

.....providing a caring and nurturing environment for you and your children at worship each Sunday. The provision follows a monthly pattern.

Second Sunday – (14th Dec, 11th Jan, 8th Feb)
a **Junior Church session** led by our leaders in an adjacent room. This allows parents time and space to enjoy worship which concludes with Communion .

The fourth Sunday is All Age Worship (28th Dec, 25th Jan, 22nd Feb) when the children will be encouraged to be more involved throughout the service and a craft activity with be provided linked to the theme.

First, third and fifth Sunday – toys for toddlers are provided at the back of the hall and in addition we will have a pack of simple colouring and activity sheets accessible to children and supervised by the parents.

A special invite is extended to our family orientated **Carol Service on Sunday 21st December at 3.30pm**
(please note there is no morning service on this day)

from the Junior Church team

SIGNS SEEN OUTSIDE CHURCHES...

“Weight Watchers will meet at 7pm next Wednesday in the church lounge. Please use large double door at the side entrance....”

Invite A Stranger for Christmas.....

Visits from strangers at Christmas began with shepherds turning up at a Bethlehem stable, and continued with the arrival of wise men from a foreign land. This year, you could carry on this tradition by inviting an international student to spend Christmas in your home.

HOST is a well-established charity, backed by the Foreign Office and many universities, linking adults studying in the UK with hospitable volunteers throughout Britain. Welcoming a student, who might otherwise spend Christmas on a deserted campus, fosters international understanding, and could make your Christmas special. See www.hostuk.org or call HOST on 020 7254 3039 to be put in touch with your local organiser.

Little Alex was staring up at the large brass plaque that hung on the side wall of the church. The plaque was covered with names, and seemed to fascinate the 7 year old. "All those names," he said to the minister. "Who are they?"

Well, they were people who used to go to this church," explained the minister. "This is a memorial to all the young men and women who died in the services."

Soberly they stood together, staring at the large plaque. Little Alex's voice was barely audible when he asked "Which service, the 9 o'clock or the 11 o'clock?"

Special Dates for your Diary

Saturday 6th December at 4pm - Christmas Concert at Sible Hedingham Village Hall (organised by Sible Hedingham Baptist church)

Sunday 7th December at 6pm - Christmas Readings
in the Small Hall at Notley Green Community Centre.

Saturday 13th December all day – Braintree churches event in George Yard bringing Christmas joy to shoppers.

Sunday 14th December at 4pm - Braintree Area Churches Together Open Air Carol Service at Freeport

Friday 19th December at 6pm - Carol Singing
at Tesco in Gt Notley

Sunday 21st December at 3.30pm - Family Carol Service
at Notley Green Community Centre.

Thursday 25th December at 10.30am - Christmas Day
at Christ Church, Coggeshall, led by our Minister, Revd Mike Shrubsole.

Sunday January 4th at 6pm - Communion Service for the New Year in the Small Hall at Notley Green Community Centre.

Sunday 11th January - Covenant service at Notley Green Community Centre.

Sunday February 1st - Northumbria Community Evening Prayer Service in the Small Hall at Notley Green Community Centre.

Church Council Members (as at Feb 08)
--

Chairperson

Mike Shrubsole	142 Tilkey Road, Coggeshall	Br. 564880
----------------	--------------------------------	------------

Secretary

Jacqui King	94 Chestnut Avenue Great Notley	Br. 560561
-------------	------------------------------------	------------

Treasurer

John Spouge	67 Derwent Way CM77 7UX	Br. 330925
-------------	----------------------------	------------

Assistant Treasurer

Maggie Ouwehand	20 The Ley CM7 3NS	Br. 348682
-----------------	-----------------------	------------

Church Councillors

Tom Chacko	19 Cressages Close Bannister Green	01371 327450
------------	---------------------------------------	--------------

Mike Higby	39 Wainwright Ave CM77 7LJ	Br. 331180
------------	-------------------------------	------------

Louise Shrubsole	142 Tilkey Road, Coggeshall	Br. 564880
------------------	--------------------------------	------------

Val Spouge	67 Derwent Way CM77 7UX	Br. 330925
------------	----------------------------	------------

We are always looking for good articles to put into this newsletter, so if you have come across anything which you think might be of interest to others, personal reflections, poems, etc, please let me have them before the next deadline, which is:

Monday 2 Feb 09, for distribution end February 09

Articles may be edited due to space restrictions.

Marian Summers 1 Pintail Crescent ph 01 376 324 186
Maggie Ouwehand 20 The Ley ph 01 376 348 682
e-mail m.ouwehand@btopenworld.com