

Services at the Parish Church

Sundays 8:00 am Holy Communion (BCP) 9.30 am Sung Eucharist (ASB)
Thursdays 10.00 am Eucharist (BCP) 3rd Sunday 9.30 am Family Service

Christmas Services

Sunday, 6th December

4.00 pm Christingle Service

Sunday, 20th Decemer

9.30 am Family Service

6.30 pm Candlelit Carol Service

Christmas Eve

4.00 pm Crib Service

Children are invited to come dressed as shepherds or angels

11.15pm Midnight Mass

Christmas Day

8.00 am Holy Communion

9.30 am All-age Eucharist

Sunday 27th December

8.00 am Holy Communion

9.30 am Sung Eucharist

Sunday 3rd January

8.00 am Holy Communion

9.30 am Sung Eucharist

3.00 pm Messy Church - Fun, Creative, Sticky, Colourful and Surprising

to Drop-in Church with a Difference for all the Family. You are invited to come for some or all of the time and explore themes of Christmas in a more informal and relaxed way using the whole building to tell the story. This will be a 'family-friendly' event (though we hope that families feel welcome at all our services). Tea and refreshments will be available throughout.

We are very pleased that the nursery classes from both St Andrew's and the Weatheralls Schools will be coming to celebrate Christmas with us in church this year in the weeks before the end of term.

Soham Salvation Army invites you to a Carol Service at 2.00 pm on Sunday, 20th December. Special Guests: Commissioners Bob & Janet Street from IHQ in London with Soham Town Band. Come and join us - bring your friends. Refreshments afterwards.

Soham Community Church invites you to traditional carols around the piano followed by a discussion on the meaning of Christmas. All welcome, refreshments served afterwards. Sunday 20th December, 10.30am at 60 Hall Street, Soham.



SOHAM CHARITY SHOP SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The popular Viva Charity Shop on Churchgate St, Soham, is looking for volunteers to help them maximise profits in the run up to Christmas. The Viva Arts & Community Group is dedicated to community development and the development and education of young people through the arts and associated community projects. The Viva Charity Shop is one of the most important means of income for Viva and helps them carry on their work with young people and the community in and around Soham.

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A Councillor's Comments

There was no Public Comment time at our November meeting so we moved on to Chairman's announcements. These amounted to dates of forthcoming meetings but also there was a display of a plaque that the committee of the National Ploughing Championships had given to the council as a result of the hospitality that we had provided for them on the eve of their event here at Soham.

Minutes of standing committees: first, Cemetery and Allotments There were two proposals that the council had to look at regarding the cemetery; one was the bid for the refurbishment of the South Chapel and the other for the repair to the cemetery wall. These were both accepted and the work will now proceed. There was one question on the allotments, as to whether the holder could keep chickens on them. After looking into this problem we decided against it.

Second, Community Amenities There will be a general increase in all hire charges coming into effect from 1st April 2010 approximately 5%. There were three main issues that we discussed regarding the Recreation Ground although they all go together. We are planning an enhanced play area with equipment from Wickstead Leisure, but this may involve moving some existing equipment from its present position to allow for a new entrance to the Recreation Ground when the Pavilion is refurbished. Another item to be put in place will be the planned Youth Shelter, which, in the first instance will be installed on the concrete area of the old skate park, although it may be moved to another location at a later date. Lastly the long awaited Skate Park will be put in place as soon as we get quotations on the cost of a concrete park, which is considered much quieter. This will be sited some way from the play area, but not so far away to escape the scrutiny of the CCTV cameras. The site of both the youth Shelter and Skate Park is important in relation to the play area, which will remain more or less in its present position. It is hoped that some movement on the Youth Shelter will take place before the end of the year.

There was a point raised on parking on Qua Fen Common when football matches are taking place. The road then becomes dangerous as people are parking on both sides of the road. An approach to Highways is being made to see if anything can be done.

Soham Vision: There should be a first draft of the Soham Vision out by the 7th January 2010 and there will be two documents produced, one will be on the Vision itself and the other will be one that promotes Soham with the view of inviting business and commerce into the town.

Applications for Financial Support: There were several applications for support at this meeting including Dial-a-ride, CAB, Soham Twinning, Viva, STF and SACT and the council dealt with each on their merits, although we are awaiting some costs from Twinning.

Community Facilities: The recommendations of the working party have been accepted by the council and we are in the process of setting up of a business plan for the refurbishment of the Pavilion. *Councillor Ginn*

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"Our volunteers have fun, meet new friends and are using their spare time for something that benefits their immediate community. Although some of our volunteers are retired, we have teenagers working here too as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award." says Frank Crosby from Viva. "We also welcome people who are between jobs and want to develop some new skills, build their confidence or just keep up their social interaction. Whatever their motivation, all our volunteers make a real difference and can have lots of tea, coffee and biscuits on us! Activities range from sorting and pricing the many donated items Viva gets each week, shop stocking, serving on the till and even helping the shop sell items on ebay."

To find out more and get an application form, visit the Viva Charity Shop at 7 Churchgate St, Soham, call 01353 722228 or email vivacentre@hotmail.co.uk.

200th Anniversary Year of Louis Braille

For blind people across the world, 2009 was not simply the dawn of another year, but a celebration of 200 years of the far-reaching legacy of Louis Braille, whose innovative code revolutionised the lives of blind people for ever. The new Master of the Stationers' Company, Richard Brewster, has been a Vice President of RNIB for 20 years and in his speech following his election he welcomed the opportunity for the Stationers, who believe so strongly in helping others become literate, to share in the celebration of Louis Braille's achievements.



Braille, who was born just outside Paris on 4 January 1809, was blind as a result of an accident in his father's workshop at the age of three. An academically gifted child, in 1819 he won a scholarship to the prestigious Royal Institution for Blind Youth in Paris. Here blind pupils were taught to read by running their fingers against letters raised above the surface of the page, using paper pressed against copper wire. Whilst beneficial, this method was problematic as the letters were difficult to tell apart, and also meant blind children were unable to learn to write.

Braille started to develop his own groundbreaking code after an inspirational visit of a Napoleonic soldier, Charles Barbier, to his school, who told his audience of the writing system he had invented called 'night writing'. Using a code of 12 raised dots and a number of dashes corresponding to sounds, Barbier's system was originally intended for soldiers to pass information silently in the trenches. This code had proved too difficult for soldiers to master, but the industrious Braille set out to simplify the system, to create his own Braille code based on a pattern of six dots, arranged in two columns of three dots. Braille's code has liberated thousands of blind and partially sighted people, by helping them read and write and do everyday things that sighted people take for granted.

The impact of Braille extends far beyond reading books. From selecting a music CD, reading music or private personal documents, to being able to tell the difference between aspirin and paracetamol - Braille means independence for blind and partially sighted people all over the world. There are two grades of Braille. Grade 1 Braille mostly uses variations of the six dots to represent all the letters of the alphabet, often for day-to-day tasks such as labelling food in the home. Many experienced Braille users also read and write Grade 2 Braille. It uses the same letters, punctuation and numbers as grade 1, but also employs a contracted system or shorthand where groups of letters may be combined into a single Braille cell. This means it's quicker to read and write than Grade 1 Braille, and also takes up less space, which is invaluable for large documents such as novels. Braille that is written or embossed onto paper or similar materials is still used every day. Paper Braille is often the most pleasant to read for leisure purposes and has the advantage of being low-tech and reasonably portable. Having been integral to the stationery industry for many years, Braille is no longer purely a paper medium. New Braille technologies are bringing about a communication revolution for blind and partially sighted people.

Knowing the amazing impact Braille's code has had since its development in 1824, it seems incredible to think that when Louise Braille died in 1852, it looked as though his revolutionary system would die with him. Thankfully his mantle was taken up in 1868 by Dr Thomas Armitage and his group of four blind men who founded the British and Foreign Society for Improving Embossed Literature for the Blind. It was thanks to this small band of friends who would later become the RNIB

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(Royal National Institute of Blind People) that Louis Braille's vital legacy has been able to live on. RNIB is the UK's leading sight charity and offers Braille and other literacy courses as well as providing a range of Braille products including the National Library's Braille collection.

For more information visit www.rnib.org.uk

St Andrew's Development Project

The builders are coming!! After many years of setbacks and problems we are finally able to go ahead with the scheme to replace the church hall facilities within the church itself. The work will begin on 4th January.

We will be installing a toilet and kitchenette and creating an open space at the back of the church that can be used for meetings and other events. At the east end there will be a smaller meeting room suitable for committees, the Sunday School and other small groups. The new facilities will enable us to make wider use of the church building and will be available for other community groups to use as well.

We have faculties (church planning permission) for both parts of the project and the Charity Commission have granted schemes for us to use the proceeds from the sale of both the former curate's house in Guntons Close and the Church Hall to pay for the work. Together with funds raised over the past few years this should give us enough money to complete the project which will also include the refurbishment of the organ.

The new meeting room will be created in the current vestry by adding a glass screen behind the carved wooden screen and clearing out the cupboards and sink. The Lady Chapel will then revert to being a vestry with new sink and cupboards. The chancel will also be screened off and a new heating system installed in all three rooms at this end so that the chancel can be used for worship all year round. The aumbry (the small wall niche where the reserved bread and wine is kept for taking communion to the sick) will be moved from the Lady Chapel to the chancel.

Then the organ will be removed so that work can start on constructing a new gallery for it to stand on, with the kitchenette and toilet installed underneath. The font will be moved to the south transept (to the right of the altar) and the choir stalls and back couple of pews removed to open up space at the back of church. The west door will be renovated and brought back into use so that brides can walk the length of the church on their wedding day once more.

Meanwhile the organ will be being refurbished by organ builder Richard Bowers. As well as necessary repairs, new ranks of pipes will be added giving a greater range of sound and making it a more suitable instrument for a church the size of St Andrew's. The mechanism and keyboard will also be improved to make it easier to play. The organ will be away for some considerable time so we will be using an electronic organ in the meantime.

Obviously with such a major project there will be some disruption to our use of the church as we won't be able to use the parts being worked on. However, by phasing the different parts of the project we hope to keep this to a minimum and will find ways of working round the problems as they arise. Anyway it will be worth a little bit of inconvenience to finally get the facilities we need for a 21st century church that serves the whole community.

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE

The Ely 900 celebrations drew to a close in November with visits by the Queen and the Archbishop of York. On the 19th November the Queen, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh, attended a service of thanksgiving at Ely Cathedral. Resplendent in an orange outfit she met with senior clergy and local dignitaries before the service. Cheered by local school children she then left for Cambridge to take part in the University's 800th anniversary celebrations.

The Archbishop of York, John Sentamu, arrived on a two day visit on the 21st. He was taken to a new community in Hampton on the outskirts of Peterborough which does not yet have a church building. It does, however, have a thriving congregation which meets in a school hall and there are plans to build a church there in the future.

In the evening he gave a challenging but inspiring talk to more than three hundred churchwardens and lay ministers from across the diocese. We were encouraged to have confidence in ourselves as a church and to talk more to people about what Jesus means to us. He also talked about the growing importance of the lay members of the church as vicars have to take on more and more churches.

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D Viva Youth Theatre's coming production of *Beauty and the Beast* from Thursday 4 Friday to Saturday 6 February 2010. *Beauty and the Beast* is a musical based on the 1991 Disney film of the same name and it ran for over 5000 performances on Broadway between 1994 and 2007. It tells the story of Belle, a beautiful and intelligent girl, and the Beast who was once a handsome Prince, but was turned into a monster by a cruel witch. The Viva Youth Theatre production features young people from Ely, Soham, Newmarket and the surrounding area and tickets will be on sale soon.

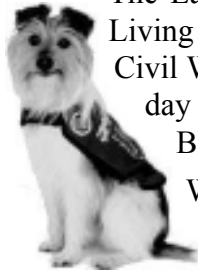
D Maudie Manning would like to thank The Soham Singers for their contribution to the Remembrance Day service, and especially for singing "When the poppies bloom again."

D Soham Museum Project A big thank you to all who helped at the November Fayre. Also grateful thanks to the following Soham shops that kindly donated raffle prizes: First Shop • Co-op • Budgens • Special Occasions • Soham Bookshop Calico Crafts.



Although the cloud was slow to clear, by lunchtime the sun shone through, and we had high hopes for a successful day! Cannon fire heralded the start of the Arena Events, with displays from Soham Fenlander Majorettes, The Maypole Dancers of the Weatheralls,

Puppy Training by the Hearing Dogs, Modern Dancing by St Andrews Primary and The Earl of Northamptonshire's Regiment of Foote giving a marvellous Living History Display and Re-enactment of what life was like in the British Civil War. Entries were up on last year, with the heaviest pumpkin of the day weighing in at a massive 167.8kg (grown by Mr Tony Primett of Bedfordshire).



Jean's dog, Scampi

We would like to thank everyone who supported the fair this year. The wonderful support we received from the community meant we were able to present a cheque for £2750 to our designated charity 'Hearing Dogs for Deaf People'.

Jean Lawrence, a recipient of a Hearing Dog and representative of the charity said: *"I know very well what a wonderful difference a hearing dog can make to a deaf or deafened person but it is always heart-warming to hear that people have had enough empathy to raise funds for Hearing Dogs for Deaf People. This helps to enable other deaf people to benefit from a specially trained hearing dog in the same way that I benefit from Scampi's help."*

We want to hear from anyone who is involved with a charity and would like it to be considered as a beneficiary for next year's fair. Applications should be made in writing to the chairman before the end of February 2010, please e-mail: office@sohampumpkinfair.co.uk Jenny Fletcher (Secretary)

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On Saturday he visited Littlehey Prison and its chaplaincy department before taking part in the closing service at the cathedral. The service was completely different to the normal kind of Church of England service. It lasted for over three hours but people could drop in and out as they liked. Imagine a church fete but with the stalls getting you to think about things rather than selling you stuff and you will get an idea of what it was like. There were "zones" exploring ideas on prayer, spirituality, the Bible, children's church, social justice, hospitality and parishes' plans for mission. There were also three short acts of worship during the afternoon led by the Archbishop. The service ended with an act of commissioning for the future of the Diocese.

Just a few words

Tim Alban Jones

It's that time of year again! "Your busy time, Vicar!" as people delight in telling me! Of course, it is a busy time for lots of people, not just the clergy. Anyone who writes a Christmas card might spare a thought for the postal workers for whom it is an exceptionally busy time. Christmas is traditionally a time when families gather together and that means extra work for those who cook. And you only have to look at the frantic way in which people are shopping to realise that it's a very busy time for lots of people.

My hope and prayer is that amidst all the 'busy-ness' and frenetic activity, you may have a chance to be still and contemplate the real meaning behind Christmas. God came down to earth in the person of Jesus not to make us extra busy; he came to set us free. God's love for our human race was so strong that he was prepared to be born as one of us, in a human family and to suffer at the hands of his fellow men and women.

It is the most amazing claim; that the God who created the earth, the heavens, the stars and the whole universe was actually born in a stable about 2000 years ago. And yet that claim is at the very heart of our Christian faith. We believe that God came among us in time and in history so that we might be changed.

And it seems to me that we rather miss the point if the only way we mark this amazing event is by making ourselves unhappy or unwell with too much activity (and possibly too much food or drink as well). It is possible to keep the Christmas feast without the excesses of our modern commercialism and consumerism. In fact, I suggest that it might be preferable to do so; not in the spirit of Ebenezer Scrooge, but with a joy that leaves the bank balance and credit cards not quite so dented.

One of the ways in which you might like to celebrate the joys of Christmas is by coming to one of the services we shall be holding over the festive season. There should be something for everyone; the excitement of the crib service with dozens of young children dressed as shepherds and angels; the mystery, awe and wonder of the Midnight Mass – there is something very special about going to church at night time.

So as we come to celebrate the birth of Jesus may the **joy** of the angels, the **eagerness** of the shepherds, the **perseverance** of the wise men, the **obedience** of Joseph and Mary and the **peace** of the Christ child be ours this Christmas time and always. Yours sincerely, *Tim Alban Jones*

PARISH REGISTERS

Baptisms

18th October	Dominic Alastair Cater
1st November	Lacey Claire Scott
15th	Olivia Rose Wright Amelia Grace Quarton-Murfitt
22nd	Imogen Isla Desborough Shelby Victoria Elizabeth Palmer

Funerals

10th November	Sandra June Thompson (48)
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