

INSPIRING RESOURCES FOR YOUR MAGAZINES AND WEBSITES:

Topical articles on issues such as Church and Ecology, Solar Power, Food Justice and Dementia are sent out twice yearly from the Church and Society team at the diocese and are available for free. To receive them please contact Martyn on martyn.goss@exeter.anglican.org

CHURCH OF ENGLAND DEVON

GOOD NEWS FROM THE DIOCESE OF EXETER
DEC 2015



Chaplain at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital the Rev Sheila Swarbrick visits patient Tony Hucker

HOW TO RUIN CHRISTMAS

IF I WANTED TO RUIN CHRISTMAS, I would try and make it as implausible as possible. I would associate it with a fat man dressed in red pulled along on a sleigh by flying reindeer. Then perhaps people would forget about the birth in Bethlehem of a baby whose life and death has had a deeper impact on the world than anyone else who has ever lived.

If I wanted to ruin Christmas, I would try and make it as busy as possible. I would pile on the pressure for families to spend more than they could afford. I would fill it with that feeling of desperation as presents remain unwrapped, cards unsent, and ensure there is no room for the turkey in the fridge. Then perhaps there would be no time for families to spend with those they love, no space for reflection and no opportunity to remember those dearest to us.

If I wanted to ruin Christmas, I would try and make it as escapist as possible. I would fill the television schedules with unmissable specials, and the drinks cupboard with Tia Maria. I would say that Christmas is all about children. I would wrap people up in cosy sentimentality. This would prevent them from dropping in on that lonely neighbour or recalling Jesus starting life as a refugee and ending it on a cross.

If I wanted to ruin Christmas, I would make it as complicated as possible, a logistical nightmare. I would fill it with demanding children, awkward in-laws, burnt mince pies and faulty gifts. I would get people queuing for Boxing Day sales before they have digested their turkey. This should remove all traces of the simple truth told by the angels to the shepherds that quotes “to you is born this day in the City of David a saviour who is Christ the Lord”.

If I wanted to ruin Christmas, I would dread a time when families laughed together, friends attended midnight services, strangers wished each other a Merry Christmas and people wondered afresh at the humility of a God who stooped to enter our humanity to offer new life and hope in a troubled world.

Of course, if I wanted to ruin Christmas, the editor would not have asked me to write this.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

+ Nick

**THE RIGHT REVD
NICK MCKINNEL
BISHOP OF PLYMOUTH**



FOR MANY OF US Christmas is a chance to spend quality time with family and friends and enjoy the delights of the season. Ill health can seem a distant reality and it can be easy to forget the vital work going on in hospitals as staff and chaplains continue to care for people in need during the festive period.

Simon Harrison is Lead Chaplain at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital and describes the ‘privilege’ of being alongside people during the Christmas celebrations.

The multi-faith team offer a range of services with the main Christmas Eucharist held on Christmas Eve afternoon, but he says: “the real busyness is much more focused on the emotional impact of being in hospital over Christmas”. Visits to the bedside play a very important part of the support

Being family at Christmas

as some patients are too unwell to get to the hospital chapel.

He adds: “We are mindful that the whole Christmas period is a ‘milestone’ for many people, it may be their first Christmas since someone died for example, and such issues come very much to the fore when isolated in a hospital bed.”

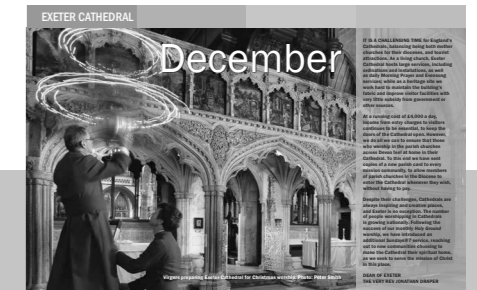
In Plymouth hospital teams of volunteers enjoy carol singing around the wards and patients and staff are invited to various carol services. A communion

service is always held on Christmas Day and a chaplain is on call 24 hours a day.

Chaplain, the Rev Sacha Pearce says: “Christmas in a hospital has always been that powerful mix of experiences, for both staff and patients. Here we are, being one another’s ‘family’ for those few hours, alongside one another, sharing together glimpses of light in the darkness.”

2016 diocesan calendar out now

THE 2016 Diocese of Exeter calendar is printed and includes some great photos and stories of life from around the diocese as well as the annual report. Two copies have been sent to every parish but there are a few left. If you would like to receive a free copy contact Publications Officer Nicky Davies by email nicky.davies@exeter.anglican.org or call on 01392 294915.





CLIMATE pilgrims

PLEASE PRAY for all those who are taking part in a pilgrimage between Exeter and Dawlish on 5 December as part of a diocesan response to the climate talks in Paris. The 21st session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change runs from 30 November to 11 December. It aims to achieve an international agreement on the climate, agreed by all countries, aiming to keep global warming below 2°C. For more information visit www.cop21.gouv.fr/en. The Devon solidarity pilgrimage will start at 10am from South Street Baptist Church in Exeter and the themes of sustainability and vulnerability will be reflected upon throughout the walk.

To participate email Joanie on joanie.harris@exeter.anglican.org or call 01392 294940.

Pilgrims will stop at Powderham Church for reflection



A comfort and a welcome

CHRISTMAS can be a difficult time for many, especially those living with loss or separation. In Plymouth, Sara and John Grier now live apart, since John's dementia needs full time care. Although she visits him often, Sara mourns her loss.

"Somebody said it is a 'living bereavement' and it really is", says Sara. "With other serious illnesses, your partner may be in pain but they are still there and as you support them through the treatment there is time to come to terms with it together. But with dementia the relationship often changes, they are there but not there. It can be very hard."

People over fifty are more worried about developing dementia than cancer. However,

To invite a Dementia Champion to your parish, call Joanie Harris, Church and Society, on 01392 294940 or email sally.farrant@exeter.anglican.org

research shows that with the right kind of support people can continue to live well for a long time. Much pain is caused by misunderstanding, stigma and isolation. So Sara has trained as a Dementia Champion to help others face the challenges.

As a Dementia Champion Sara has given the PCC of Tamerton Foliot an awareness session that's updated their understanding of dementia. Now they know how to welcome people with dementia and help them remain active for as long as possible.

She says: "I am passionate about raising awareness of dementia. The reception people get in church is so important and I know there are people in our congregations that need help."

Sara is also part of a group that have so far made over 50 'fidget quilts' (see below) that bring comfort to people with dementia.

Sara adds that she hopes more people living with dementia will accept help when it's offered as it can make a huge difference. "There is help out there but people often seem reluctant to ask for it."



Devon girls finalists in Chorister of the Year award

CONGRATULATIONS to Emma Richards and Isabel Tuffin Donnevert, both members of the choir at Holy Cross Church in Crediton, who made it to the finals of this year's BBC Radio 2 *Chorister of the Year* competition.

Both girls have been singing for many years and both have been head chorister.

