

CHOIR NEWS FOR THE NEW YEAR

Congratulations to trebles **Olivia Doran** and **Katherine Walpole** who won last term's best attendance and best effort cups (and some chocolate!). Well done and keep up the good work! During December, the Choir Carol Singing jaunts raised **over £400** for the Children's Society (with some money still to come in!). A fantastic effort! You may have noticed that one of the Choir items in the Carol Service (The Lord at first did Adam make) was arranged by "Grafton" and in case you were wondering, this is St Michael's very own **Alun Grafton**. Alun has composed a number of pieces, so we hope to sing some more of his music in the future.

THEFT FROM THE OFFICE

We have always tried to be reasonably security-conscious, but somebody has managed to get in to the office and steal a computer. The theft occurred between Friday 28th December and Wednesday 3rd. Fortunately, no personal data of anyone was stored on this computer, and we have taken steps to avoid any kind of loss to the church arising from the loss of the data, which in any case was backed up. The police have, of course, been informed. Should anyone have any information which might help to solve this crime, or if anyone was in the office between these times, please would you contact Rupert, Colum or John Castle immediately. We are tightening security, and apologise in advance if this causes inconvenience for anyone. We would also ask all of our church members and hall users to be particularly vigilant. Thank you.

CHILDREN AND HOLY COMMUNION

As you should be aware, the PCC will be considering in May whether to implement a scheme for preparing children to receive communion before confirmation. If you are interested in finding out more about this matter, or would like to ask questions, you are invited to attend the first 40 minutes of the PCC meeting this Tuesday (8th Jan), when we will be hearing from Rev Pam Gordon about how this works in Warfield parish. The meeting is in the Pastoral Centre at 8 pm.

ANNUAL QUIZ EVENING FOR ALL THE FAMILY

Put a note in your diary for Saturday, March 1st. There will be a Fairtrade Supper and glass of wine. This is going to be even better this year, and the profits will go towards Church Funds. It falls in Fairtrade Fortnight (February 25th - March 9th).

CHURCHYARD ORNAMENTS

In December the PCC advertised in this newsletter, its intention to contact relatives about graves in section E of the churchyard (adjoining the north side of the church) which infringe the Diocesan churchyard regulations due to ornaments, edgings etc. We expect to begin this process over the next couple of weeks, asking those concerned to comply with the regulations by 1st April. We are trying to balance sensitivity to personal loss with the need to respect the health and safety of churchyard volunteers and to preserve the churchyard as an attractive amenity for all, and ask for your understanding and patience. The Churchwardens and the Rector would be happy to discuss any matters privately with anyone concerned.

INTRDOUCTION TO MATTHEW

As of Advent Sunday we are in Year A of the 3-year Revised Common Lectionary which is used internationally and across denominations. Most of the Sunday Gospel readings in Year A are from Matthew's Gospel (next year (B) is Mark, last year (C) was Luke; John is spread over the 3 years).

Matthew's Gospel is considered to be the most Jewish of the 4 Gospels. Matthew uses quotations from the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the Messiah, and the fulfilment of God's revelation to his people. He also majors on Jesus' interpretation of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount. The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees probably has resonances with Matthew's situation after the destruction of the Temple in AD70, when the Pharisees took the lead in the development of Judaism and there was conflict between Christian Jews and official Judaism. But Matthew also shows that God's purpose in Jesus is for the whole world. The Magi at the beginning of the gospel represent the nations coming to worship; the centurion who has faith is seen as the pattern for Gentiles coming into the Kingdom; and in the closing verses of the Gospel Jesus sends the disciples out to "make disciples of all nations". Other features of Matthew include teaching on relationships in the church and on evangelism, and a number of parables and other sayings that are not found in other gospels (e.g. The sheep and the goats, the foolish virgins, much of the Sermon on the Mount). There is much to guide us as we seek to live the Christian life day by day. Rev. John Castle

CRECHE ROTA

We need a volunteer to organise the crèche rota from the end of this month. Please contact the office if you feel you can do this.