

GroomNews

CHRISTMAS 2009

What? No Christmas Card??

This year, rather than add to the planet's burden of billions of ultimately unwanted Christmas cards, we've decided to send out most copies of this edition of GroomNews without a card or by email only. We're donating the money that we would have spent on cards to World Vision instead. If you haven't already sent out your cards, may we encourage you to consider doing the same?

Challenges and Changes

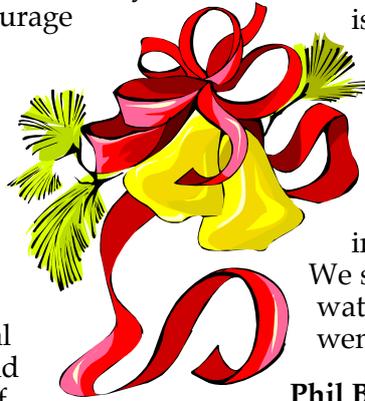
2009 has been another year of challenges and changes, the most dramatic of which was our move away from London to the delightful wilds of Bedfordshire. Sue now has a new dual role as Priest-in-Charge of two semi-rural parishes, Henlow & Langford, and as Assistant Diocesan Director of Ordinands in the Diocese of St Albans. We've been warmly welcomed by the two villages, the vicarage is the best yet and we are especially delighted to have a garden again. There are numerous opportunities for ministry with three schools and all sorts of community groups. In the run up to Christmas Sue is dashing here, there and everywhere, but she is thoroughly enjoying being back in parish ministry!

Sue has put her DMin studies on hold for the current academic year but she is fulfilling the occasional teaching commitment alongside tutoring for LST's Open Learning Hebrew course.

Unfortunately Langford isn't so good for Phil's job at LST: the journey takes two hours each way so he's cut down to working three days a week and is looking for work closer to home. Reduced hours, of course, means a reduced income, but also helps to reduce LST's costs in running the shop: along with so many other bookshops, the LST Bookshop is struggling to break even in the current economic climate. Although students and staff have been very supportive, having the LST community as a 'captive audience' doesn't help when they have limited funds and are just as liable as anyone else to shop online for lower prices.

A Less Painful Hip

Following a course of physiotherapy, a carefully planned regime of exercises and regular swimming at a very good pool in Biggleswade, Sue's hip has been much less painful this year.



Almost

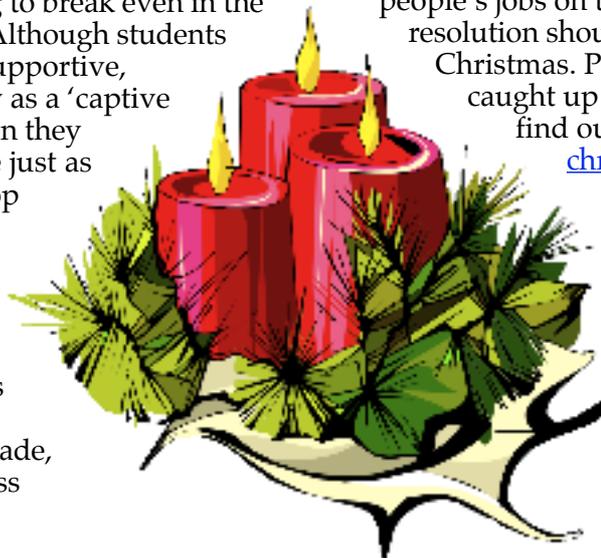
is still moored on the Kennet & Avon (K&A) canal with the Newbury Boat Company. This year's summer holiday took us further along the K&A to Devizes, where we resisted the temptation to go through what is widely regarded as one of the most impressive flights of locks in the country. We settled for mooring at the top and watching sympathetically as other boaters went for it in the rain...

Phil Blogs On

The SPCK/St Stephen the Great bookshops situation seems to be approaching resolution: earlier in the year the Charity Commission appointed an Interim Manager who took control of the shops from the Brewer brothers. He is now selling the organisation's assets in order to pay outstanding debts. Read all about it at spckssg.wordpress.com

Sadly the last year has seen another crisis building up in the Christian booktrade: in October 2008 STL Distribution (the UK and Europe's biggest Christian wholesaler and owners of Authentic Media publishing and the Wesley Owen bookshops) attempted to install a new IT system as part of its parent company Biblica's globalisation strategy. Unfortunately it all went pear shaped and for reasons that remain unclear, they were unable to revert to the previous system. In November Biblica announced that they were pulling the plug on their UK operations. It's all very messy with at least 490 people's jobs on the line, but hopefully some resolution should be found before

Christmas. Please pray for everyone caught up in the situation. You can find out more on the UKCBD blog: christianbookshopsblog.org.uk.



With Our Love

As always, this comes with our thanks for your friendship, our love, best wishes for Christmas and our prayers for peace in the year ahead,

Phil & Sue

