

December, 1984.

Dear

Christmas is rapidly approaching and we must bring you up to date with our news.

So much has happened during the 8 months since our move to Mudeford. The daughter church of All Saints' had been without a Priest-in-charge for a year and the Wardens in particular must have heaved a sigh of relief when Michael arrived to take up his duties. At parties given to welcome us we were received with such warmth and friendliness that we immediately felt at home - but that is Mudeford. Complete strangers will greet us in the street and almost everybody is ready to "pass the time of day". No-one ever seems to be in a hurry but, as most of the people around here are retired, time is not of the essence.

Our little church has a lovely atmosphere and the stained-glass windows are especially beautiful. Members of the congregation keep the building spotlessly clean, the brasses brightly shining and the flower-vases filled. We have between 80 and 100 communicants every Sunday (the building holds 130) and on special occasions extra chairs have to be put out. Unfortunately we have no hall so the Sunday school which Michael intends starting in January will have to be held in the vestry, as is the Youth Club at present with occasional meetings at "All Saints' House". There is a flourishing Wives' Group and also Womens' Fellowship for the older ladies. Starting in January Joy will be running a Bible study group one afternoon a month (a follow-up to meetings held here every week during a recent Christian Commitment Campaign in Christchurch.) The Ladies' Work Party is also held here at All Saints' House one Wednesday afternoon a month - a marvellous feeling of fellowship prevails whilst making articles for the various bazaars held from time to time during the year to raise funds for the church.

Michael is kept busy conducting funerals (plenty of these!), baptisms and weddings, sick-visiting (at home and in hospital), caring for the elderly and bereaved, having house-communions at 2 old-age homes, as well as dealing with young and old with problems. He also does a regular duty at the Priory every Wednesday, 7.30am Matins followed by Communion, then Evensong at 5.30pm. Often in the evenings there are meetings to attend. With all this he doesn't have much leisure time, Tuesday is his one day off. But he's happy in his work for the Lord.

Dorset abounds in beauty spots. We are very lucky to have the New Forest close by (a few minutes by car) and we can reach the sea in 20 minutes on foot. We feel as if we've lived here all of our lives and that surely is proof of how happy we are.

We've been blessed with many visitors over the past months. Some have spent a few days with us, others have "blown in" for a short while or spent a whole day here. It's been wonderful to see old friends again and we hope that next summer will bring another influx of guests.

Fiona has settled happily. One reason for this is that she has a steady boyfriend! whom she met at a non-denominational church which she attends on Sunday evenings and sometimes during the week. She goes to "All Saints'" with Joy every Sunday morning and also helps Michael with the music for the Family Service on the first Sunday of every month by playing her guitar and leading the singing. She recently spent 12 days in Israel with a Church group and found it most interesting, returning with so many photographs that Michael and Joy have not yet had time to wade through them all!

Andy is.....

Andy too is happily settled and has made a number of new friends; (is still CB "mad" though his computer comes a very close second.) He is now in his 4th year at Secondary school ("O" Levels) and is taking 8 subjects. He cycles to school, which is two miles away, when Michael is unable to take him by car. Last June he had a nasty accident at a roundabout, the driver of the car involved being to blame. Though the bike was damaged he suffered no serious injury, praise the Lord, mainly bruises, a painful arm for some time and a cut to his face. Nothing daunted, as soon as he was fit and the bicycle had been repaired, he took to the road again. He sings tenor in our church choir and, like Fiona, plays his guitar for the Family service. Andy thoroughly enjoys ringing our one and only church bell for 15 minutes every Sunday morning to remind the lax that the 10am Eucharist is about to begin!

Our young grandson is growing fast. He was 9 months old on the 22nd November and has been crawling since he was 7 months. He's such a sunny-natured little chap and very friendly. Kath, Nick and Jem (as we all call him) have stayed with us on 3 separate occasions during the summer and we've been able to enjoy him without having to attend to the chores connected with a baby!

We've recently acquired a new addition to the family. She's a black Labrador + Doberman named "Kim". Only 5½ months old when we fetched her from the RSPCA kennels in August she was quite a handful to begin with but is now settling down well, and very obedient most of the time. Sadly, we had to have our cat, Bodger, put down at the beginning of August due to kidney failure, but Kanga (Fiona's little ginger tom) is going strong, though he does not like Kim at all so we have to keep them separated.

Joy's Dad and brother, Arthur, are happily settled in their Wokingham flat. The former turned 91 in August and keeps fairly well. He has regular visits from the District Nurse and "meals-on-wheels" supplies a very nourishing dinner from Tuesdays to Fridays. Unfortunately they will not be able to spend Christmas with us as it's too far for the old man to travel. This will be the first Christmas for 11 years that we have not all been together. Kath helps with the music in her own church so she and her family will not be with us either, but they will spend the previous weekend with us so we'll have a pre-Christmas celebration together. Andy's 15th birthday is on Friday the 14th and Nick has said that for a present he will take him to a football match on the Saturday afternoon..

You will be in our thoughts at Christmas when we toast "absent friends" and now, as the catch phrase goes "that's all, folks". It just remains for us to send you our very best love and to wish you Peace and Joy at Christmas and in the coming year.

God Bless you,

Michael, Joy, Fiona and Andy.

