

*Dear*

**1996 started off very sadly for us as, early in January, we discovered that our beloved Labrador, Kim, had cancer of the liver. On 22nd January, after family deliberation, she was put to sleep. Kim was nearly 12 years old and had been a much-loved member of our family for almost eleven and a half years. Needless to say we were all utterly devastated by her loss and still miss her very much.**

**In February Michael went into hospital again, the sixth time in 14 months and spent almost 4 weeks there. His state of health fluctuated for most of the next 5 months but we are now thankful to say that he is his old self apart from a troublesome knee which has to be drained of fluid periodically. Michael has been able to help out at our local church by doing the occasional Service which he thoroughly enjoys. He has also managed to play bowls on a number of occasions during the summer. Joy has joined a Bible study group at our local church but finds the garden keeps her too busy at the moment to get involved in church work.**

**The big event of the year for all of us was the wedding of Andy and Mel on 31st August. The weather was perfect and, most importantly, Michael was able to perform the ceremony as he had for the others. Mel's sister, Michelle, was chief bridesmaid, the other being a close friend. Kathy played the organ, Fiona read the lesson (1 Corinthians 13) and, during the signing of the register, Kathy, Fiona, Jeremy and Timothy sang the John Rutter version of "All things bright and beautiful" (Kathy accompanying on the keyboard). The church where the marriage took place is in a small village named Sopley where both Mel's mother and grandmother were wed. The reception was held in a Bournemouth hotel, where the bridal couple stayed overnight, and was followed by an evening disco in the same hotel. Andy and Mel spent a luxury two week honeymoon in Barbados.**

**Timothy has recently spent a week camping with his classmates accompanied by three adults and experiencing the excitement of abseiling, canoeing and other unusual pursuits. Jem has been on two weekend camps this year, once with the Scouts and on another occasion with the Church youth club. He also went on a school trip, spending 1 week in Exmouth, Devon. The Gibbs' family spent an interesting and absorbing day at Legoland in Windsor in July and stayed with us for two weeks in August.**

**Ending on a happier note than we began, we wish you all the blessings of a very Happy Christmas and peace in the new year.**

**WITH OUR LOVE**

**Michael, Joy, Kathy, Nick, Fiona, Colin, Andy, Mel, Jeremy & Timothy.**