



Parish News

St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry

November 2022

FREE

The Ordination of the Rev'd Ella Harris

Curate to the Saffron Walden and Villages Team Ministry



The new deacons of Stansted Archdeaconry with the bishops and archdeacons.

Rev'd Ella Harris was ordained Deacon at Chelmsford Cathedral by the Rt Revd Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani, Bishop of Chelmsford, in a service on Sunday 11th September 2022, together with other curates from the Stansted and Harlow Archdeaconries.

Attendance was by invitation as space was limited, but the service can still be watched on YouTube at: <https://youtu.be/thang68XAQY>

Ella has an interest in rural ministry and so will focus her work on the Cam Village Churches (including Great Chesterford, Littlebury, Littlebury Green and Wendens Ambo) as well as on St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden.

Originally from Widdington in Essex, Ella now lives in Saffron Walden with her husband Toby.

Clifford Want



Left to right: Rev'd Jeremy Trew, Team Rector; Rev'd Ella Harris, Deacon;
Rev'd Alex Jeewan, Team Vicar

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PARISH NEWS - EDITORIAL DEADLINE

The deadline for contributions for each issue is the 1st Sunday of the previous month. Hence, the deadline for the **December** issue is **Sunday 6th November**.

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www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews

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The November sky at Lackford Lakes
by Gilly Hayes

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St Mary's Church Website:

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The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew

Jeremy writes...

The autumn is a time of endings and beginnings, to my mind much more so than the New Year. At its start the summer holidays come to an end and children return to school, some start for the first time. Even for those without children there is a tangible change in tone as the roads are busier at different times, the town centres that little bit quieter during the day, and so on. A few weeks later and we mark harvest with our celebrations giving thanks for the crops gathered in and, nowadays, for all that people offer in their providing for the many daily needs of a modern society. We see around us an agricultural industry that seems to lurch from crisis to crisis, yet which contrasts heavily with the seeming changelessness of the British countryside; a contrast which is more than a little naïve. Moving on we come to the festivals of All Hallows and All Souls; celebrated by most as a rather banal Halloween, but used by Christians as an occasion to remember all those loved ones who have died and we still miss. It is a time to mourn afresh and have our faith restored in a hope which is yet to come.

And then we arrive at November. On Remembrance Sunday we recall all those who have given their utmost for the safety and freedoms we enjoy so blithely today. I am struck each year as we read out the lists of names, held in trust for the whole community by our churches of those who were killed, that these lists represent not just the deaths of individuals, but of a way of life. So many were lost from communities like ours that victorious Britannia could never be the same again. So much good came from their sacrifice, yet we still pay a price to this day. Sadly over a century of remembering seem to have done little to diminish our human folly with regards to conflict. Yet we must remember those who offered us so much by surrendering everything.

Finally, as everyone around us joins the mad rush of Christmas preparation – as we do to, let's be honest – the Church celebrates its New Year. Advent is not just a time to switch to a new set of Sunday readings, nor a handy four week warning if the impending celebration. Advent is also a time for new starts. It tells of the story of God's new start for the human race. After the futility of humanity straining to reach God through the devices of religious laws and holy kings and lands, God finally breaks through to humanity and a new story begins. Advent recounts the beginning of that story and takes



us to the wonderful mystery of Christmas.

So that's the Autumn: A time of endings and beginnings. And, a time to remember and give thanks to and for those who have made these transitions possible; thank you then to all who nurture children and who teach them; thank you to all who farm our lands and bring us food to eat; thank you to all who decorate our churches for their celebrations; thank you to all who have touched our lives for good and whom we will remember; thank you to the many who went to fight for our freedoms; and, thank you God that you overcame whatever anger, sadness and frustration you must have felt at humanities repeated folly in order to send your Son into this world and offer to everyone a truly new beginning.

Best wishes

Jeremy

News in brief

6th November – join the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Churches and Christians across the UK are being invited to remember the suffering of Christians persecuted and imprisoned for their faith in countries around the world. According to Open Doors, the 2022 rankings are as follows. The top 20 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian are: 1. Afghanistan; 2. North Korea; 3. Somalia; 4. Libya; 5. Yemen; 6. Eritrea; 7. Nigeria; 8. Pakistan; 9. Iran; 10. India; 11. Saudi Arabia; 12. Myanmar; 13. Sudan; 14. Iraq; 15. Syria; 16. Maldives; 17. China; 18. Qatar; 19. Vietnam; and 20. Egypt.

For the full list of 50 countries, please go to:

www.opendoorsuk.org/persecution/world-watch-list

Call on big tech companies to be transparent and ethical

The Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group ('EIAG') has recently published a report advising investors with Christian values how to approach investing in big technology companies. The Church's National Investing Bodies (NIBs), which received the advice, has published a new policy in line with this guidance.

The report recommends technology companies make public commitments including: a commitment to verifiable transparency; to promoting human-centred design; to enabling the flourishing of children and other vulnerable groups; and to fostering a tech eco-system that serves the common good.

The Bishop of Manchester, Dr David Walker, deputy chair of the EIAG, said:

"This report addresses important issues about how technology influences our lives, including the most vulnerable among us. Investors like the Church's National Investing Bodies can play a role in working with technology companies to ensure they take a human-centred approach, giving users more control and being transparent about their working practices."

(Parish Pump)

Let's bust a couple of myths!

In my discussions with people about the environmental crises we face, certain arguments come up again and again:

Photograph: Stephen Leonardi on Unsplash



'The problem isn't CO2 emissions it is population growth. The more people; the more emissions we will get. We need to reduce the world population.'

Population is indeed a problem, but it is not directly related to climate change. Indeed, for most parts of the world, the problem is population *implosion*, not explosion. In developing countries and acutely in China, birth rates and populations are falling while life expectancy is increasing. We already have a shortage of staff caring for the elderly; that shortage is going to become acute. That is why in China and Japan they are developing 'Carebots' so that the old and infirm can be cared for by robots. That doesn't sound too appealing, does it?

Although global population has increased massively since 1950, The population growth rate has now declined to 1.1% and is set to fall further, but there are some countries with rising populations, such as Oman, Niger, the Congo and Uganda. There are three key solutions: education of girls, better health care and getting rid of corrupt dictatorships. If only! It is corruption that means that people have no spare earnings to put in a pension, or a safe, inflation-proof place to keep it if they do. Without a pension, you have to rely on children to support you in old age.

Health care would reduce rates of childhood morbidity, but until those rates are reduced, people will tend to have more children, calculating that some will die. Meanwhile empowering women would lead to a whole host of benefits to humanity!

No. The real driver of Climate Change is affluence. People who own private jets, are frequent fliers or who own SUV's, the people who regard themselves as

'exceptional', have far greater carbon footprints than whole towns or villages in Africa and the global south. The affluent really should not be blaming the poor. Our role should be helping countries such as India, who quite legitimately want to reduce poverty, to do so using clean energy and clean technologies.

Tragically of course the Climate Crisis will solve any problems of overpopulation in developing countries in the most cruel and unjust way: they are the ones losing their crops, lives and livelihoods already. They are already paying the price for a problem they did not create.



Photograph: Karolina Grabowska on pexels

'With the rising price of gas, increased mortgage rates and people having to choose between heating and eating, we simply can't afford sustainable lifestyles.'

It is quite frequently argued that a Green Transition would cost too much and would bankrupt us. I wonder if such people have added up the spiralling costs of *not* addressing the climate crisis. The hurricane damage in Florida is set to cost insurers \$27-36bn and will wipe out the savings of all those without insurance. The cost of the massive floods in Pakistan are estimated at \$10bn. I suspect that cost will have to be borne by the government, individuals and the poor rather than insurers. It will be crippling for a country already struggling with debt.

Here, so far, our floods are more localised and our storms rarely reach hurricane force, but harvest failures around the world are already driving up food prices making the stark choices for the poor even more difficult.

Plans to insulate homes, schools and hospitals were abandoned in the years following the banking crisis on the grounds that we couldn't afford them. Had we done so, our homes would be warmer and our gas bills would be lower already. Every delay in addressing climate change racks up the cost of action and makes life harder for the poorest.

Somehow, we have to address ALL the tough issues that we face simultaneously; not play one off against the other as if it were a zero-sum game.

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader



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Mothers' UNION

Mothers' Union Meeting Report 8.9.22

Mothers' Union Corporate Communion took place in the North Chapel at 2pm on 8th September. The service was led by Rev'd Canon Chris Bishop and our Guest preacher was Rev'd Paula Griffiths.

Paula has recently published a collection of her poems and one of them, 'There will always be Beauty' was included as part of the service. It was read beautifully by a member and followed by the hymn 'For the beauty of the Earth'.

Paula chose to commemorate the birth of our Patron Saint, the Blessed Virgin Mary in her sermon and requested the reading of Luke Chapter 1 verses 26-38 the Annunciation passage for the Gospel reading read by a member.

Paula spoke of Mary as an ordinary faithful girl, chosen by God to bear his only Son, and her obedience and acceptance of the situation in which she found herself. 'Be it unto me according to your word'. She also spoke about prayer in its many forms and suggested to us to be natural and ourselves when offering our prayers to God and to make time for prayer. 'More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of'.

Prayers were offered for the beauty of God's creation, Harvest, overseas members and families everywhere. Also, for the ordination of our Curate Ella Harris and for the sick and bereaved.

Afterwards, there was time to thank all those who were involved in the very uplifting service and enjoy refreshments and pleasant conversation.

Brenda Sheath



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Archive Group

A monthly record of pieces of interest from our past
Parish Magazines

November 1943

My Dear Parishioners,

I have been asked and have consented to hold once more the service which for 25 years has been associated with November 11th, but on the strict condition that there be no celebration of the armistice of 1918 - an armistice which apparently no one intended either to observe or enforce and utterly stripped of all reality by the present war, a document so futile and discredited it seems a hollow mockery to communicate, and better far to regard it as exploded, dead and buried. Hitler soon showed his contempt for it by marching his legions into the demilitarised zone, ignoring the disarmament clauses and annexing Austria. England practically acquiesced in these proceedings by contenting itself with mild, feeble, formal protests. An arrangement so farcical is surely best forgotten.

Remembrance of the fallen is another matter entirely, provided it includes those lost to us in 1919-1943 as well as in 1914-1918. The pity of it is that it should be identified in the popular mind with the defunct and still-born armistice. Some other date should surely be substituted so as to divorce and disconnect the two..... We can only hope that the authorities of Church and State, when the happy day of peace arrives will reconsider the whole subject and commemorate all our fallen warriors in one grand and solemn celebration.

Yours sincerely

I. Hughes

October 20th 1943

Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist



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Prayer for the month *provided by the Prayer Team*

November starts with All Souls' at the beginning of the month. (2nd November). Remembrance Sunday is about half way through the month (13th this year). Most days have a reading from Revelation.

Prayer. "I am the resurrection and the life.
Those who believe in me , even though they die,
will live, and everyone who lives
and believes in me will never die.
Do you believe this?"

John 11-25 NRSV

Gelio

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The Friends Visit Lincoln Cathedral and Castle



A group of The Friends went by coach up to Lincoln on 9th September and as you can imagine the Cathedral was a sombre but awesome experience. All tours were cancelled and there was a sense of peace throughout the building. Hushed voices as we all absorbed the atmosphere. Lots of candle stations as well as the condolence book and movingly, regular short readings and prayers were said echoing through the whole Cathedral. It was not the planned visit however it is one we will never forget.

We can recommend the Cathedral Café where they had prepared a room just for us. The service and food was excellent. We had morning coffee on arrival and an excellent lunch later, some of us even had tea before we left.

The afternoon was spent by many at the Castle where we saw the Magna Carta and visited the Castle Prison, not a place you would want to stay for more than a very short visit. The views from the Parapet were fabulous, you can see for miles and everything looked so green.

On this trip we were joined by Christine Lawrence who was our Treasurer for a time but now lives in York, it was so good to see her. Our thoughts during the day were of Lawrence Gooderham our late Chairman who's funeral was on the 7th. He had been looking forward to joining us - bless him.

Watch this space for news of our spring Cathedral visit, book early to get a place on the coach.

Pamela Mugliston

Calendar for November 2022

This calendar is provisional. See The Grapevine or the church website for the latest information, particularly for streaming of services.

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

One service in church each Sunday is streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website.

Thursday 3 November

- 10am Silent Prayer in the North Chapel
- 1pm Service with Prayers for Wholeness and Healing

Sunday 6 November

- 8am BCP Holy Communion
- 10am First Sunday Communion [Y]
- 6.30pm H2H Youth-led service for all

Sunday 13 November

- 8am BCP Holy Communion
- 11am Act of Remembrance at the War Memorial
- 11.15am Royal British Legion Remembrance Day Service [Y]
- 4pm Words and Music for Remembrance Day; followed by Compline

Sunday 20 November - Christ the King

- 8am BCP Holy Communion
- 10am Holy Communion [Y]

Saturday 26 November

- 9.30am Christmas Fair

Sunday 27 November - Advent Sunday

- 8am BCP Holy Communion [Y]
- 10am Family Service
- 6.30pm Advent Carol Service



Regular weekday services at St Mary's

Tuesdays

5pm Evening Prayer by Zoom, see weekly bulletin for login details

Wednesdays

8am Morning Prayer

9.30am Holy Communion

St James', Swards End

Sunday 13 November

3pm Remembrance Service

Sunday 27 November - Advent Sunday

9.30am Holy Communion



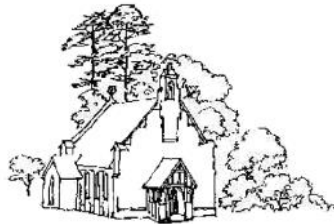
St John's, Little Walden

Saturday 12 November

10.40am Act of Remembrance
at the village war memorial

Sunday 27 November - Advent Sunday

11.15am Holy Communion



YOUinthe**PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop

Hilary Walker

Hilary was born and brought up in New Eltham in south-east London where she attended first Sunday school and then morning service at her local church. At eighteen she went up to Homerton College, Cambridge and fell in love with all things Cambridge, including Peter, her husband-to-be. Her first job took her to Surbiton in the era of the Good Life on television, which some of you may remember. After three years there, she and her husband moved to Saffron Walden shortly after the birth of their first daughter and found out what a friendly place it was. Hilary said that it was the closest she could get Peter to returning to Cambridge as he was then commuting into the City.



Her two daughters, Helen and Liz, attended Sunday school at St Mary's but, after an unfortunate incident on her first Sunday in Cambridge where no one at the church she visited even said hello, Hilary chose to worship at home. It was only nearly forty years down the line, and after a number of happy years at Cambridge Community Church (C3) where she was taken by a work colleague, that Hilary decided it was time to return to worshipping in her local community. The welcome at St Mary's was a very pleasant experience, nothing like that one so many years earlier, and Hilary soon felt at home at St Mary's.

It was not long after arriving at St Mary's that Hilary felt a call to ordained ministry and that is the route that she is now following. She is currently in her second year of training and hopes to be ordained deacon next September. She hopes that St Mary's and the villages won't mind being lumbered with her as she is viewed as too old to be sent elsewhere.

Hilary enjoys being part of a number of teams at St Mary's, including the Guild of Servers and the Prayer Team. She is also involved in the Wednesday morning communion service and coffee and a Bible study group. H2H and Taizé services are also real highlights.

Hilary found it hard to think of one event in Saffron Walden which has stuck in mind above all others as quite a lot of her time is spent dipping into the past as a local historian with a PhD in the eighteenth century life of Saffron Walden,

but she decided that the two Civic Ceremonies this year, firstly the Queen's Jubilee and then later, sadly, after her death, probably fit the bill best.

The idea of having a coat of arms and a motto is not something that Hilary has really considered. A little research threw up a motto in her family history 'Passes avant', but that is more of a battle cry. Hilary decided that she preferred 'Love conquers everything.' If only everyone could appreciate the love that God always shows us and could put it into practice, what a difference that would make, not only in Saffron Walden but throughout the world.



From the editor...

Your editor will be pleased to receive copy on any topic of general interest to our readers. These can be sent at any time and will be considered for inclusion in future editions. Please note:

1. The opinions expressed in the articles in this magazine are those of the authors.
 2. The Editor reserves the right to edit, or exclude, any article submitted. Please be aware when submitting articles 400 words fits comfortably onto a page and that any article over 800 words will need to be edited to ensure readability.
 3. Illustrations and photographs are the property of the copyright holders and should not be reused without permission.
 4. The Parish News cannot accept responsibility for the goods or services advertised in this magazine - advertisements are accepted in good faith.
- Many thanks in anticipation!

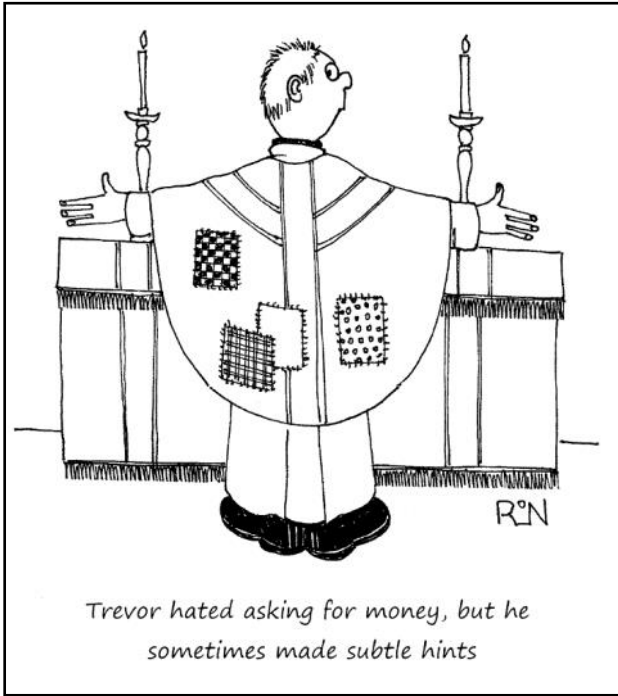
Quote, unquote

Sometimes people think of church as being like a giant helicopter. They don't want to get too close in case they get sucked into the rotas.

Milton Jones

I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go.

Abraham Lincoln



From the Registers

Baptisms

25th September: Jake Thomas Sherry

Weddings

22nd September Matthew Burbridge and Emma Lawrence

24th September Stephen Larsen and Dané Howes

Funerals

7th September Lawrence Gooderham

20th September Simon Noakes

29th September Joan Gilling



Coffee Break +

On Wednesdays from September, join us for refreshments.

On the first and third Wednesdays there will be a short craft activity, so if you have a craft that you would like to share, please contact me. If craft is not particularly your thing, board games will be available.

On the second Wednesday there will be a relaxation/mindfulness session.

The sessions are from 10:15 till 12 noon, starting with refreshments.

All welcome.

Gill Caswell



St Mary's Music Newsletter

written on 2nd October

The evening of 9th September was full of contrasts for the Choir. Practice started sombrely with a prayer for the late Queen Elizabeth II, and then a complete change of almost every piece of music we had rehearsed the preceding week for the Patronal Festival and Choral Evensong to more solemn motets, hymns and a psalm appropriate for the first 2 Sundays of the mourning period.

But it was also the day scheduled for the annual Choral Scholars concert, a truly joyous occasion organised and performed by Choral Scholars present and past, especially present. What a range of talent. There were violin, guitar and piano pieces, solos, duets and finally a rousing Abba medley with 12 scholars, including the Organ Scholar, belting out – appropriately - “Thank you for the music”.

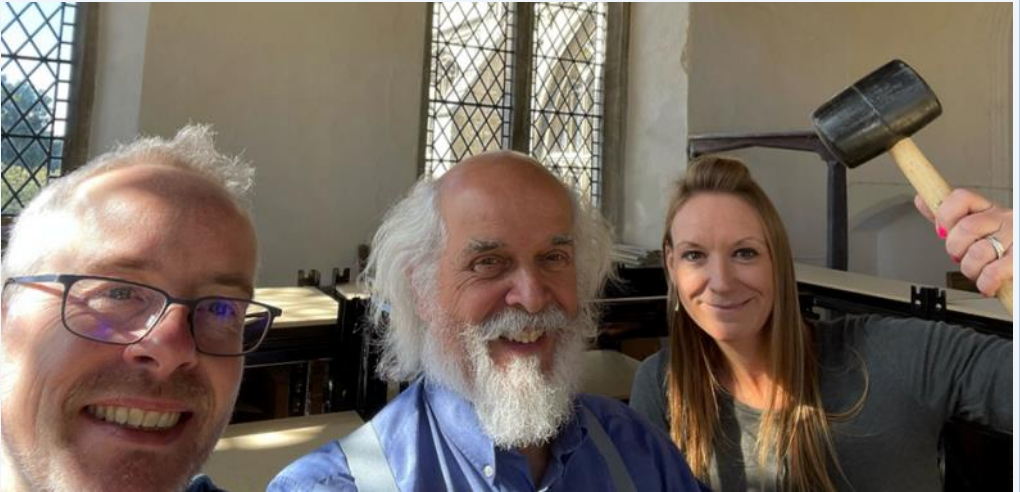
On the following Sunday, 18th September, it was a privilege to lead the music for the Civic Commemoration Service marking the death of the Queen. The service sheet informed us, the material used had been prepared long in advance by representatives of the Church and the Royal Household, and had been approved for use by Her Majesty. As we gathered to remember and to celebrate over 70 years of faithful service, the choir sang pieces ranging from W Harris's haunting “Holy is the true light” as an Introit, through Edward Bainton's anthem “And I saw a new heaven” to John Rutter's familiar “A Gaelic Blessing”. The well-loved congregational hymns were supported not only by the choir and organ, but also by rousing trumpets from the organ loft, culminating in the National Anthem with its new dedication, followed by Stanley's Trumpet Voluntary.

Since then, the regular round of rehearsal and preparation has resumed in support of Sunday worship. But the period from October to December is always particularly busy, in anticipation of Remembrance Sunday on 13th November, as well as the carol and tree services. Diary dates include the Advent Carol service on 27th November, and the Christmas Carol Service on 18th December. The SMMA has purchased a new anthem book from the proceeds of the summer concerts, and the choir is looking forward to singing some new pieces from it this year, in addition of course to well-known and well-loved carols.

Meanwhile the Joyful Noise group for our very youngest musicians aged 5 – 8 (school years 1 to 3) has re-started. Very pleasingly 4 children have just progressed up to the Junior Choir over the summer, so new members will be

particularly welcome. If you know of anyone who would like to join, or would like to make a "taster" visit to the group, please contact choirsmw@gmail.com for more information.

And finally....



The music library had run out of space, so a crack construction team of Hannah (SMMA Chair), Oli King and the Rev'd Canon Chris spent a busy Saturday morning putting up 10 shelving units in the Muniments Room. We are very grateful for a donation by the Stansted Airport Passenger Community Fund which paid for the shelving and funds for music containers following a successful application by Hannah. The money is raised from the unwanted foreign currency of passengers and staff which is collected at the terminal and donated to local causes within a 20 mile radius of the airport.

Otilie Lefever

Advent begins on 27th November 2022

Advent Sunday marks the beginning of a new Church year. The genius of this new beginning is that it starts with a time of preparation; a period of waiting, longing, and looking for the coming of Christ; getting ready for the coming of Jesus at Christmas, and also preparing for his final second coming.

For me, one of the joys of Advent is the hymns this season inspires, my favourite being: *O come, O come, Emmanuel*. I love it because of its plaintive, atmospheric tune, but also for its words. These are so familiar to us that we can miss their richness and their power.

The hymn is based on an ancient liturgy, sung during the evening service of vespers, one each evening in the final days of Advent. These are the so-called O Antiphons, short chants sung in association with a psalm or a canticle. They are identified by their first two words in Latin. So, on 17th December the choir sing *O Sapientia*, that is O Wisdom come to us. The following day it's *O Adonai*, O Lord come to us, and so on until 23rd December when it's *O Emmanuel*. They each address Christ directly, using one of seven titles given to him in scripture, and calling on him to come to us. After each verse comes the joy, and the promise of the refrain: *Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel*.

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
that mourns in lonely exile here,
until the Son of God appear.

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee,
O Israel.*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
thine own from Satan's tyranny;
from depths of hell Thy people save,
and give them victory o'er the grave.

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer,
our spirits by thine advent here;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high,
and close the path to misery.

O come, O come thou Lord of might,
who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height,
in ancient times didst give the law
in cloud and majesty and awe.

*From the Great O Antiphons (12th – 13th century)
Trans. John Mason Neale (1818-1866)*

Advent is, or should be, an unsettling time, but in a very good way. Firstly, because it's about waiting, and I don't think many of us enjoy waiting. And secondly, because it confronts a perception we have about ourselves: the mistaken belief that we can rely on our own efforts and save

ourselves. But Advent says 'No, that's not true', and the hymn makes it clear why: *O come, O come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel, that mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appear.* We are captives of our own shortcomings, our own sinful nature, and we need rescuing. You don't have to be a displaced person to see yourself as an exile. Any situation where you don't feel at home or in control of what is happening to you, is an experience of exile. Thankfully, Advent carries with it the message of the sure and certain hope of Christ's return. And so, we can encourage each other when we lift our voices and sing out the promise in the refrain.



The hymn has four more verses outlining who this Emmanuel (the God-with-us person) is. Rod of Jesse reminds us of Isaiah's vision: *A shoot shall come out from the stock of Jesse, ... The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him (Isaiah 11.1).* He will save his people.

Dayspring or dawn, or morning, or in some versions morning star, speaks of the coming Messiah. The advent of Christ at his nativity, and at his final coming, will cheer our hearts, as more and more of his light floods into our lives, dispersing gloomy clouds, and putting our anxieties about life and death to flight.

Jesus is not strictly the key of David, rather he holds that key. In the Book of Revelation it says: *'What he [Christ] opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open'* (Rev 3.7). In other words, Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, no one can come to the Father except by him. He has the authority to open heaven to us and to close off death for ever.

The last verse speaks of the one who was there on Mount Sinai, in cloud and majesty and awe, when Moses received the Ten Commandments. His first coming at his nativity was in humility, recognised only by those whose hearts were open to him. When he comes again, it will be clear to all, who he is, for it will be in majesty and awe. If that sounds threatening, then just remember this is none other than Jesus our Lord, who healed the sick, raised the dead, had compassion on the lost, and gave his life that we might live forever.

If you google the titles of all seven antiphons (omitting the vocative Os) and reverse the order, they produce a fascinating acrostic message: E R O C R A S. In Latin that's *Ero cras*, meaning 'Tomorrow, I will be' or 'Tomorrow, I will be there.' In the last days of Advent, the choir have expressed our longing for Christ to come to us, with on 23rd December, the final call of *O Come, O come Emmanuel*. This completes the singing, and the acrostic is formed, giving us the wonderful promise: 'Tomorrow, (the eve of Christmas), I will be there.'

Andy Colebrooke

(a précis of the talk given at *The Quiet Morning 2021*)

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If you are looking for a final resting place for a loved one, please bear in mind Radwinter Road Cemetery where the gates are always open and there is tranquillity within. For further information please contact Elaine Baynes, Cemetery Officer, at Saffron Walden Town Council, Market Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR. Telephone: 07769 167 179 or email elaine@saffronwalden.gov.uk

<https://saffronwalden.gov.uk/services/cemetery/>

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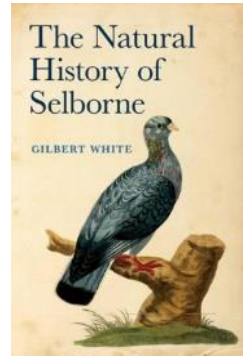
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God in the Sciences

Wonder and Worship

“I was travelling, and out early in the morning: at first there was a vast fog; but, by the time that I was seven or eight miles from home towards the coast, the sun broke out into a delicate warm day. We were then on a large heath or common, and I could discern, as the mist began to break away, great numbers of swallows (*Hirundines rusticae*) clustering on the stunted shrubs and bushes, as if they had roosted there all night. As soon as the air became clear and pleasant they all were on the wing at once; and, by a placid and easy flight, proceeded on southward towards the sea”.



How many church leaders today have time to enjoy their surroundings? Gilbert White was a vicar who became famous for his observations about the flora and fauna of his parish. His letters about the local wildlife through the seasons were so beautifully written that they are still in print today, more than 200 years after they were first published as *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selbourne*.

White is a great example of someone who saw science and faith in harmony. He writes that he hopes his readers will be inspired to “pay a more ready attention to the wonders of the Creation”. His stories are often so vivid that he gets away with packing in quite a bit of scientific detail, painting a more accurate picture of the wonderful events he observed as he travelled around the countryside. White’s book is one of the classics of nature writing, and there’s even an apocryphal story online that this is one of the most printed books in the country, after the Bible and Shakespeare.

White may have been one of those people with a capacity for endless activity, or perhaps he took rather more care over natural history than his vocation. Either way, I do think that anyone - from the parish priest to the youngest member of the congregation - could learn from his appreciation of creation. It is well worth spending ten minutes every now and again staring into a bush, pond or tree - especially in winter when it’s easy to hurry indoors and put the kettle on. Experiencing wildlife first-hand is wonderful fuel for our worship of God and care for His creation. As Psalm 111 says, “Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them” (NIV).

Dr Ruth Bancewicz, The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.
(Parish Pump)

A free copy of White’s book can be downloaded at: -
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1408>



God in the Arts

Thank you, Lord, for food to eat

There is a character in a Russian novel who says, 'Ladies and gentlemen, let us assume that man is not stupid...but if he isn't stupid, he is monstrously ungrateful all the same – a creature that has two legs and no sense of gratitude.' That is certainly true in a world where carping and criticising come more easily than praise and thanksgiving. It is an attitude which rubs off on all of us, and is like Aesop's fable of the donkey, who was never happy with his lot, whatever the weather, whatever the season.

Aesop told the story to remind us of the need to cultivate a spirit of gratitude – not to put blinkers on our eyes and be negative about life, but to open both eyes and hearts in thanksgiving for the world in which we live. We do that each time we celebrate the eucharist together. We do it when we say grace before meals. This month's painting, 'An Old Woman Saying Grace' by Nicholas Maes brings this truth to mind.

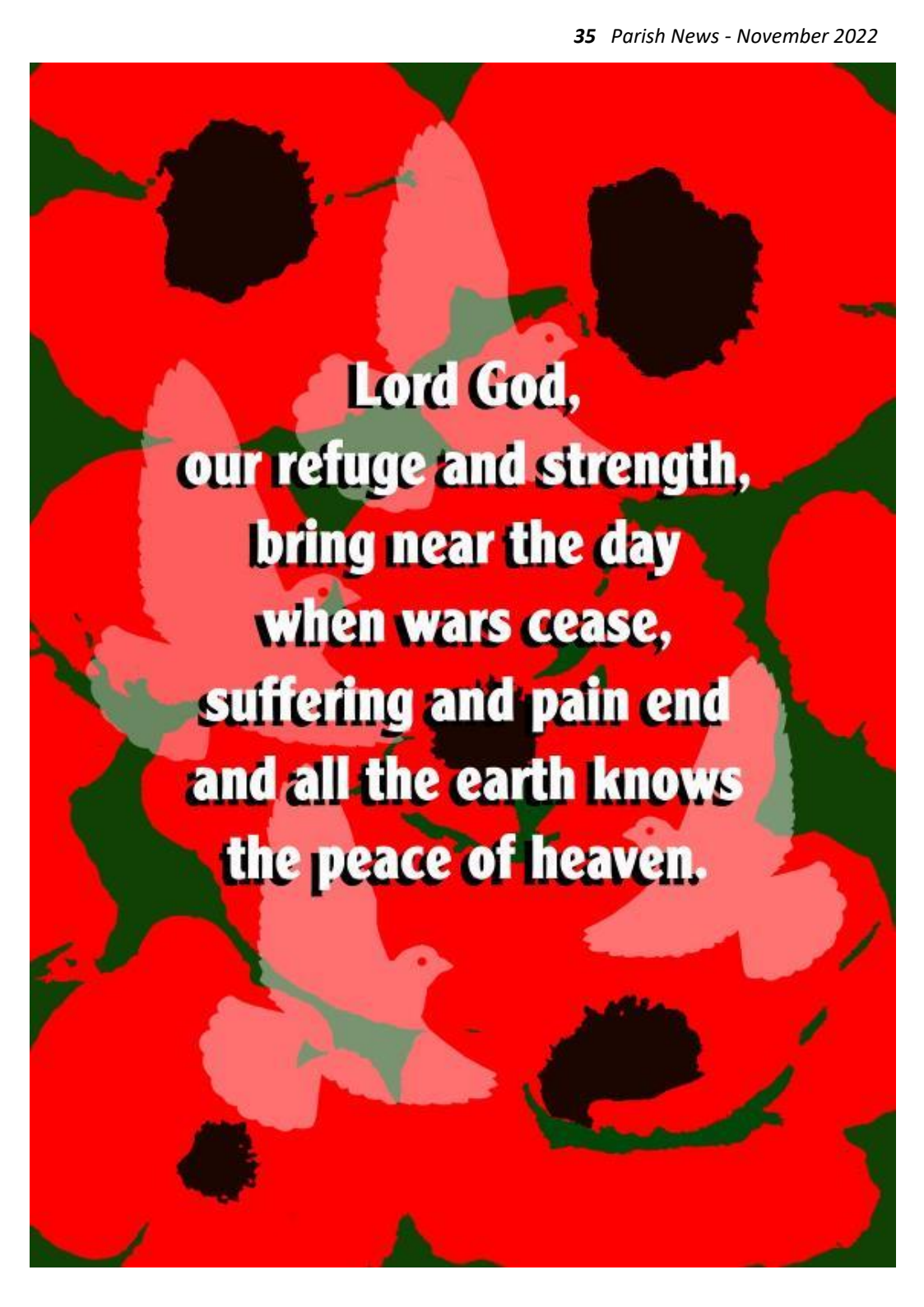
Maes was a pupil of Rembrandt and he lived from 1632 to 1693. He spent most of his life in Dordrecht in Holland, and, apart from portraits, he delighted in painting women – women spinning or reading the Bible or preparing meals. Here the woman is sitting down to a simple meal of soup, bread, butter and fish. But before she enjoys this food, she puts her hands together and, as simply as the food in front of her, mouths a prayer of thanks to God.

The artist tells us that this offering of prayer was a daily pattern for the woman. For on the ledge at her side lie an open Bible, a lamp and an hour-glass, and on a nail some keys. Signs that such prayer can be a light to illuminate the days of our lives and the key to open our hearts to the kingdom, just like the woman in the painting.

It is a tender moment, both concentrated and intimate. At first glance, there is a tinge of sadness for the table is set just for her. She will eat alone. And then our eyes catch sight of the cat's paw reaching up to enjoy the food as well. Who knows? – something may spill over the edge of the table for the cat to enjoy. Simplicity and humour go hand in hand to remind us all of the need to be thankful. And thankfulness for food can spill over into thanksgiving for all the mercies and gifts that come our way in life.

The Rev'd Michael Burgess (Parish Pump)

'An Old Woman Saying Grace'. The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



**Lord God,
our refuge and strength,
bring near the day
when wars cease,
suffering and pain end
and all the earth knows
the peace of heaven.**



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