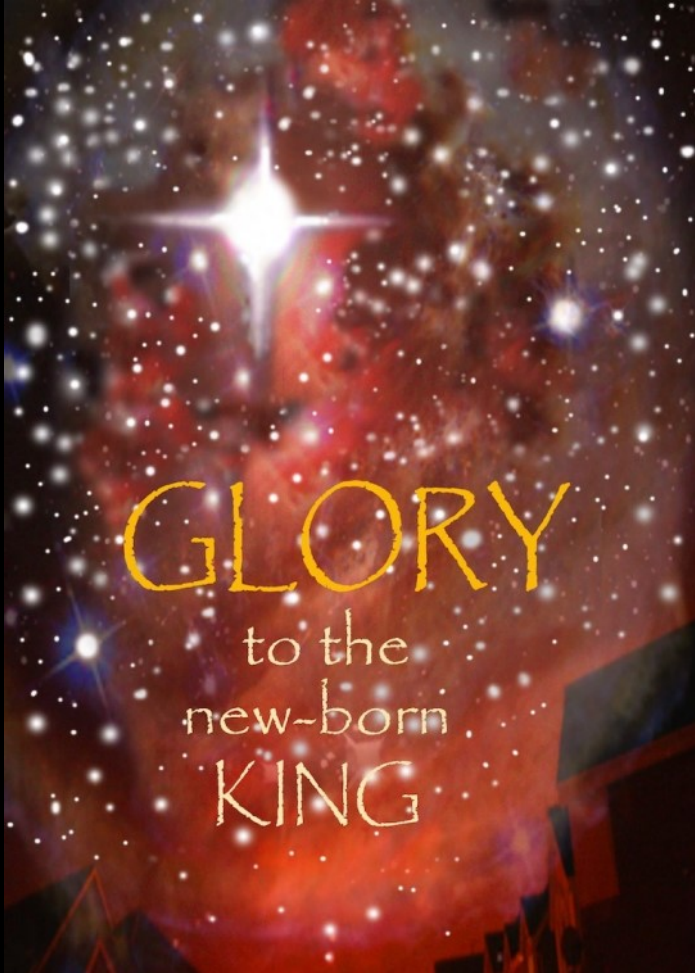


Parish News

St Mary's Church, Saffron Walden

St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End

Part of Saffron Walden & Villages Team Ministry



December 2023 - January 2024

FREE



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December
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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 **February** issue is **Sunday 7th January**.

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PARISH NEWS IS A FREE PUBLICATION and can also be viewed (**in full colour**) online at our parish website:

www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/parishnews

Cover illustration: Parish Pump

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The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew

Jeremy writes...

Christmas arrives at the end of this month – you didn't need me to tell you that! If you have children then it has probably been arriving since late September, and even if you don't, you couldn't escape the presence of cards and decorations in the shops interestingly juxtaposed with Halloween tat.



Preparing for Christmas can be both harrowing and demanding. There's so much to do, so many lists to check. And then it's Christmas Eve, and half of it not done. A final gargantuan effort!... and then you can flop onto the sofa to watch the last half of the "Sound of Music" and try and work out just how many you've got for lunch the next day.

Christmas requires precisely 10% more preparation than we are able to give to it. But it's worth it, because it is just about the only occasion in the year when we are likely to meet up with so many of our family and friends and take time to spend more than just a few minutes with them. It might seem stressful at times, but normally we conclude it has all been worth it. Preparing well for Christmas is worth it. That's why we have the season of Advent just prior. It is the time when we hear the stories that provide the background to why God bothered to take the not inconsiderable risk of sending his Son into a world that could be brutal and dangerous. Preparation is always an important time, because it allows us to make sense of the celebration that follows.

I once read a psychiatrist's advice on how to survive Christmas, and I pass it on to you as something we have found helpful: Don't overdo the housework – low lighting and candles can hide a multitude of sins (and dust). Get out for some fresh air, even five minutes – it clears your head, reduces tension, and leads to fewer arguments. And remember, if you're the one doing all the entertaining this Christmas, you deserve a break too – get someone else to do the washing-up and relax by spending ten minutes guessing what possessed Auntie Beryl to buy you that ghastly jumper.

Finally, before I close, three ancient laws that are still on the statute books: It is illegal not to go to church at Christmas; It is illegal to drive or ride to church on Christmas Day; It is illegal to have more than three courses for your Christmas dinner. Go on... break the last two, I won't tell! But if you'd like to keep the first you would be most welcome.

Have a very special Christmas.

Jeremy

From the Registers

Weddings

- 2 Sept Dane Karaman and Francesca Riordan
9 Sept Jordan Dawes and Kate Gunton
16 Sept Christian Shaw and Elizabeth Stephani

Funerals

- 7 August David Harris
9 August Peter Clyne
5 Sept Karen Storey-Cornell
21 Sept Aileen Barr
28 Sept Penelope Davey
3 Oct Hazel Hawkins
5 Oct Stephen Purkiss
20 Oct Bertram Elsom
23 Oct Robert Burns

Prayers for December-January

provided by the Prayer Team

Almighty God,
Where there is war and hunger
bring peace and plenty.
Where there is fear and despair
bring joy and hope.
Where there is hatred and death
bring love and life.
And where all things lead to darkness and destruction
let us celebrate the coming of Jesus, Prince of Peace. Amen.

(after the Iona Community)

And as we look to the New Year, some lines from a well known hymn:

Loving shepherd of thy sheep,	Where Thou leadest I would go,
Keep Thy lamb, in safety keep.	Walking in Thy steps below
Nothing can Thy power withstand;	Till before my Father's throne
None can pluck me from Thy hand.	I shall know as I am known.

The Economic Message of Christmas

The birth of Jesus was the beginning of a lifetime devoted to deep, radical change in society. Whether you are inspired by the lines of the Magnificat to ‘scatter the proud in the imagination of their hearts’, or the lines of the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth,’ Christmas must be the time when we renew our resolve to ensure that ‘God’s will is done on Earth as it is in heaven.’

But as we look around the Earth, it seems that we couldn’t be further removed from heaven. We despair at the wars in Ukraine or Palestine; the widening gap between rich and poor, the self-interest and corruption of politicians here and around the world, the global economy that thrives on driving down the wages and human rights of its workers and the climate crisis which is destroying the lives of those who have contributed least to the problem.

David Attenborough’s Planet Earth 3 series showed vividly the precarious state of ecologies that have taken millions of years to evolve. We seem to be digging deep holes for ourselves with no attempt to extricate ourselves from them. Indeed, the profit motive seems to be urging us to dig deeper! Christmas itself has been taken hostage by consumerism, brightly lit and adorned with fairy lights, and we are swept along with it. We want to indulge ourselves in the depths of winter – that was what the pagan festival was about - and when I urged you to ‘buy a toilet for Christmas’ (December 2021 issue), that alone wouldn’t have given rise to very much festive cheer! We want to enjoy the company of those we love while holding in our prayers those who are grieving, lonely, sick, homeless and whose lives are in peril, but perhaps now is also the time to consider the need for transformational change and resistance to the system that is destroying life on earth.

When Jesus overturned the money lenders saying, ‘My house will be called a house of prayer but you have made it a den of thieves,’ I am tempted to expand that to consider how God’s creation has been mortgaged by the profit motive of those with vast interests, vested in maximising the exploitation and pollution of the planet. A recent projection by TIME Science is that we will reach the critical climate threshold of 1.5 degrees in early 2029. “Beyond that the risks



of catastrophes increase... a key ice sheet could kick into irreversible melt, and water shortages, heat waves and death from extreme weather dramatically increase, according to an earlier United Nations scientific report.” But we are still burning 40 million metric tonnes of carbon a year, with a view to levelling out only when it is too late. What is driving this suicidal behaviour? I can only think it comes down to the greed of those who are already multi-millionaires and billionaires, who believe their wealth will protect them from the calamity. They are wrong, of course. Soon after crossing the threshold when feedback loops have moved beyond our control, insurance companies will be able to insure less and less, until a point is reached when nothing is insurable and the whole global economy grinds to a halt.

It is time to think deeply about our economy and how it can be made to work better. How can it value Nature adequately? How can it measure and incorporate Justice, Health and Happiness? How can the greed that exploits off-shore banking, tax evasion, shell companies be replaced by love for our neighbours? The *Open Bible* lists 100 verses relating to Christ's exhortation to “give up everything to follow me” (https://www.openbible.info/topics/giving_up_everything_to_follow_jesus). It is a challenge that makes most of us feel uncomfortable, but maybe within those verses is the sort of economic system that could save humanity.

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader

Photograph by Karolina Grabowska on pexels.com

The Transition Project suspends operations

The Transition Project which has been supporting people seeking new job opportunities suspended this work at the end of October.

The project has been working in Saffron Walden for over fourteen years and has offered clients free assistance with Job Searching, CV Preparation and Interview Practice. During this time, we were continually refreshed by the fact that so many of those we helped and who were offered employment came back to see and thank us.

We will continue to support existing clients but will not be accepting any new clients after the end of October until further notice.

Those who are seeking support similar to that previously available via the project can find help from fully funded groups such as, UCAN at Cornell Court, Evolve Essex, Essex Libraries or Stansted Airport Academy. Further details of these groups are available from Saffron Walden library.

The Transition Project Team

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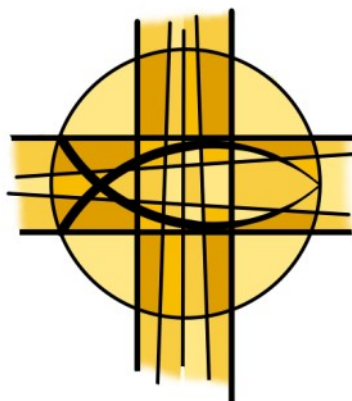
On the brow of the hill
the night air licked our faces.
The mist of our breath hung about us
like veils. Had we deserted our sheep,
risked all for an illusion?
I would have turned back
but a star dazzled bright
and imprinted on my sight
was a throng of angels.

Ground fell away steeply
in places. Slipping on skittering stones
we clutched at sparse branches
and rocks ripped our feet.
I dreaded the rough-trudge return
from a journey that could be for nothing.
And I feared going on to face
attack and abuse because we had dared
to venture crazily out of place
to follow the song of angels.

But we slipped through starbright streets
unhindered. And there was an inn,
so packed and rowdy we were inconspicuous.
We longed to linger, to wallow in the warmth
and in the merriment forget why we had come.
But clear above the din our ears still rang
with song that led us to a King.

And there he was - newborn,
but waiting for us to come, it seemed.
And I forgot the trials of travelling.
There was now no return
to our strayed and sorry selves.
The journey had just begun.

Christine Ractliff



Christmas Tree Festival

9th and 10th December, 11am - 4pm

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Radwinter Road Cemetery, Saffron Walden, CB11 3HU

Are you looking for a final resting place for a loved one? The Cemetery at Radwinter Road is an oasis in the town which is open 24/7 and there is tranquillity within.

Further information on burials is available from The Cemetery Officer at Saffron Walden Town Council, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HR Telephone: 01799 516501 or email enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk

Our local Cemetery is a peaceful space which offers a natural environment for all types of wildlife and as a result is an important nature conservation resource in the town. Daily maintenance and gardening are carried out which ensures the space is both clean and tidy, where residents and visitors can visit for peace and reflection.

The Cemetery is divided into different areas; Lawn cemetery, Traditional area, Garden of Remembrance, scattered ashes, and areas for children and young people. There is also a separate section for War graves which is cared for by The Commonwealth War Graves Commission. A small well-appointed Chapel is available to hire.



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

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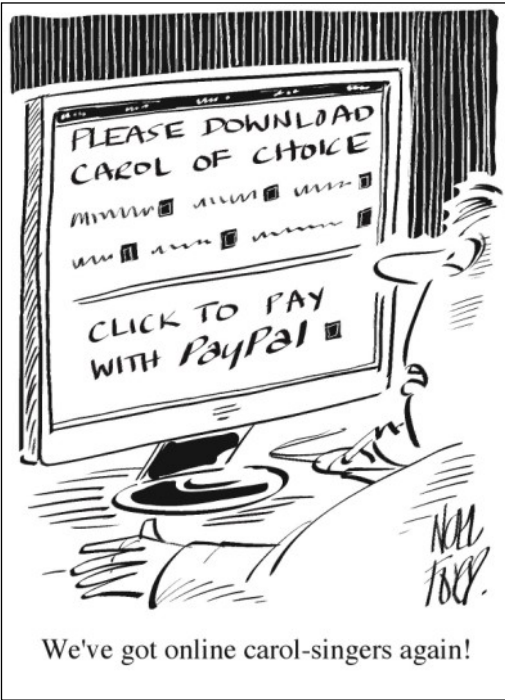
Tel: 01245 496347 / Text: 07950 406173

You can also book appointments online at www.hearinghelpessex.org.uk

If you are housebound, please ask about our home visits service.

As usual our service remains completely free of charge, but as a small charity working hard to support Essex residents living with hearing loss, all donations are appreciated.





We've got online carol-singers again!



Sara preferred to let people work out the hymns for themselves

Gelio's Anthology of Obscure Proverbs



This time I thought you might be interested in two proverbs concerning Conscience.

There is an Ancient Proverb that says **'All too often a clear conscience is merely the result of a bad memory'**

I hope you like this one from France. **'There is no pillow so soft as a clear conscience'**



FRIENDS OF THE PARISH CHURCH

The Friends of the Parish Church is a very active group who have been working hard for St Mary's for 90 years. We are able to help financially with minor and major projects, the last major funding paid for the beautiful oak Welcome Furniture that greets you at the West door.

Almost 40% of our members also help on a regular basis with the various activities in the daily running of the Church, you will note Welcomers wearing Friends badges at the 10.30am service.

We have a bookstand offering postcards, prints and books for sale to our many visitors as well as our own congregation. On the social side, twice a year we travel around the country to visit different towns and cities to tour Cathedrals.

Why not join us and feel part of the process and feel that sense of pride in the work we carry out. There are application forms on our bookstand, and on the website so **come and join us**. Watch this space for updates news and activities.

Should you wish to help the Friends further by leaving a Legacy there are leaflets to assist you in that process, also to be found on the bookstand.

Chairman : Denis Tindley,

Secretary: Pamela Mugliston Treasurer: Sandra Marsh



FRIENDS BOOKSTAND

We hope that you found something of interest on our Bookstand whilst you were browsing at the Christmas Fair. Not too late to buy one of our books as a Christmas gift or to stock up on some useful notelets to keep handy for the quick message you might wish to send.

Don't forget the posters which make a lovely gift and we have the third one which space does not allow us to display but there is a photo . Please ask either Sandra or myself and we can provide you with a copy.

Your support is always very welcome. Happy Christmas

Pamela Mugliston



Have you noticed some new **brass badges** on the Welcomers for first and second Sunday 10.30am services? Both of those teams are Friends' members which is fantastic. We have calculated that over 25% of members play an active part in the life of the Church as well as supporting St Mary's financially where we can.



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The Calendar

This calendar is provisional. See The Grapevine or the church website for the latest information.

St Mary's, Saffron Walden

One service in church each Sunday is streamed on YouTube [Y]: details on the church website. Coffee is served after the Sunday 10:30 services.

Sunday 3 December - **Advent Sunday**

8am BCP Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion [Y]
6.30pm Advent Carol Service

Thursday 7 December

10am Silent Prayer in the North Chapel

Saturday 9 December

9.30am Quiet Morning

Sunday 10 December

8am BCP Holy Communion
10.30am Second Sunday Holy Communion [Y]
4pm Christingle Service

Sunday 17 December

8am BCP Holy Communion
10.30am Holy Communion [Y]
6.30pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols [Y]

Thursday 21 December

7.30pm Blue Christmas Service

Sunday 24 December

10.30am Holy Communion [Y]
4pm Lighting the Christmas Tree
6pm Lighting the Christmas Tree
11.30pm Midnight Holy Communion

Christmas Day 25 December

10.30am Family Communion [Y]

Sunday 31 December

10.30am Team Holy Communion [Y]

Thursday 4 January

10am Silent Prayer in North Chapel

Sunday 7 January

8am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Holy Communion [Y]
6.30pm H2H Youth led Service for all



Sunday 14 January

8am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Second Sunday Holy Communion [Y]
4pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 21 January

8am Holy Communion (BCP)
10.30am Churches Together United Service at the Baptist Church
4pm Living Stones Service

Sunday 28 January

8am Holy Communion (BCP) [Y]
10:30am Family Service
6.30pm Epiphany Carol Service

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Sunday 21st January

10.30am United Service at SW Baptist Church

Monday 22nd January

7 for 7.30pm Agape Meal at URC Church

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 (with Prayers for Wholeness and Healing on the 1st Wednesday of the month) **NB at 9am on 20th December**



St James', Sewards End

Sunday 3 December - **Advent Sunday**

10.30am Holy Communion

Saturday 16 December

5pm Carol Service

Sunday 24th December

11.30 pm Midnight Communion

Christmas Day 25 December

10.30am Holy Communion

Sunday 7 January

10.30am Holy Communion

Sunday 21 January

10.30am Morning Praise



St John's, Little Walden

Sunday 10 December

10.30am Family Service

Saturday 16 December

5pm Carol Service

Christmas Day 25 December

10.30am Holy Communion

Sunday 14 January

10.30am Family Service

Sunday 28 January

10.30am Holy Communion

The Lighting in St Mary's – An Update

The March 2023 edition of the *Parish News* included an article about the lighting in the church and why we have established a team to look into replacing and re-designing the current lighting. The team have made a lot of progress since March.

A number of important documents that a lighting designer will require have been written, including a Liturgical Statement which identifies all the uses of the church for worship and how each part of the church is used in our worship, a similar document for other uses of the church, e.g. recitals and concerts, and a Statement of Needs for the project. We also issued a questionnaire to various groups which use the church to gather their input on how the church is used and what they think of the current lighting. All of this was gathered together in a project brief for the lighting re-design which, after PCC approval, was issued to 5 lighting designers to ask them to provide a quotation for a concept design.

All 5 designers responded by early June and the team short-listed 3 of the design companies asking each to identify 2 reference installations which we could visit and where we could talk with their clients. Across the summer, Paula Griffiths, Barbara Flaxman and I visited the chapels at two Cambridge colleges, Rochester Cathedral, St Helen's Cliffe (a village close to Rochester), Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church and St George's Chapel, Windsor. The team recommended the preferred designer to the September PCC and received approval to move ahead with the concept design.

The concept design is an initial, outline design for replacement lighting for the public areas inside the church, which will be developed after consideration of the different types of lighting that could be employed. It will set out the overall "look and feel" of the lighting design ideas for St Mary's which will be provided to us with a set of animated visualisations. The design work has been awarded to Bruce Kirk from Light Perceptions, a nationally recognised expert on lighting cathedrals and churches who advises the C of E centrally and Chelmsford Diocese, as well as two other dioceses. Bruce has worked on the lighting at St Paul's Cathedral and many other cathedrals and churches across the country, St George's Chapel Windsor and is presently working at Ely Cathedral. He also designed and oversaw the lighting installation in the Millennium Dome in 1999 before it opened! We hope to have the concept design report early in 2024 and after review by the PCC, and assuming that they approve it, we will share it more widely with members of the congregation. In addition to sharing the design ideas at St Mary's, we will need to consult with external bodies like Historic

England because St Mary's is a grade I listed church of national significance.

Following which there will be more detailed design work to be done in 2024 and approval to be obtained from the diocesan authorities. We've now formed a fundraising team and are hopeful that we will be able to install the new lighting in 2025, although the fundraising will determine the timing in the end.

In addition to Paula, Barbara and me, other members of the Lighting Project Team are Simon Potter (churchwarden), Denis Tindley (former churchwarden and our link to The Friends of St Mary's), Noel Starr (who represents our choir) and Edward Gildea (who keeps us focussed on the benefits of the project in reducing St Mary's carbon footprint).

In the meantime, if you have any questions or comments, please do feel free to talk with me or any member of the team.

Steve Hasler

Extracts from the PCC Meeting 6th September 2023



Thanks and prayers were given for John and Dawn Saxon, who were joining Harwich Deanery; for Alex Jeewan going to Milton and for the ordination and ministry of Ella Harris and Hilary Walker.

Due to Alex Jeewan and John Saxon leaving and the vacancy in Ashdon/Hadstock, there is a possibility that the two house-for-duty posts might be combined into one part-time stipendiary post and be advertised alongside a full-time post for the Cam Villages. The Rev'd Kate Peacock will become the new Archdeacon of Stansted following the retirement of Robin King. Recruitment is proving difficult in the Deanery.

The title of Parish Administrator has been changed to Team Administrator to reflect current working.

A list of PCC members is displayed at the back of church and PCC and Deanery Synod dates will be in *The Grapevine*. Congregation members can approach PCC members about items they may wish to have raised. There is an open invitation for members of the congregation to attend Deanery Synod.

The PCC agreed to a choir trip to Birmingham Cathedral on 4th November.

The first 6 months of the year showed a deficit of £11,990 (£3k worse than budget), mainly due to reduced stewardship income. This will be the fourth year in deficit. David Birchall noted that church running costs are £250,000 p.a. or £685 per day.

Outward Giving Grants were reduced in many cases last year due to our continuing deficit. In 2023 the PCC will make external grants similar to those in 2022, except for CMS as we no longer have a CMS link missionary, and Jimmy's which is a much larger charity than ourselves, although the annual fundraising

supper for Jimmy's will continue. A Fundraising Team, comprising David Birchall, Steve Hasler, Patrick Li, Anna Martin and Lisa Brooke, would meet in October or early November to find ways of fund raising for capital projects in the light of our ongoing deficit.

The PCC approved £3995 plus VAT for Light Perceptions to carry out an initial church lighting design. Improvements to lighting in the tower had been carried out. The claim for lightning damage to the camera and sound systems had been settled and the work carried out. The claim for damage to the organ was still being assessed. A church layout group, comprising Steve Hasler, Denis Tindley, Robin O'Neill, Gill Caswell, Jeremy Trew and Oli King, would meet in the near future to consider the church layout including implications of a nave altar.

The PCC agreed the DAC should be approached following the offer of a churchyard sculpture to commemorate the Saffron Walden debates which were the precursor to the Putney Debates*.

A group of 19 young people and leaders from Aftershock and Community Church Youth attended Dreaming the Impossible Summer Youth Festival and said that it felt so powerful worshipping with 4000 other young people.

Clifford Want

* <https://saffronwaldenhistoricalociety.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/saffron-walden-and-the-struggle-for-democracy.pdf>

YOUinthe**PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop

Brian Kerrison

We arrived in Saffron Walden 6 years ago. We moved from Newbury Park, which is part of the London Borough of Redbridge, to a small new house in Thaxted Road, which we thoroughly enjoy. Our son and his family have lived in Saffron Walden for 19 years, so we were familiar with the town having visited it on many occasions. Our son and daughter-in-law both are well established in the town and their two sons attended the County High School; although the older is now at university.

I was brought up in the traditions of the Congregational (URC) church, but after being married and moving to Newbury Park, Chris and I attended our nearest church, which happened to be Anglican. We like the Anglican form of worship with its structure and traditions. Chris became an excellent Churchwarden, and I



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CHRISTMAS CRACKERS

I will be handcrafting my Crackers again this year with all proceeds going to St Mary's.

In each cracker there is a hat, a snap, a motto/joke, a gift - and 'something to play with'.

The increased price this year is £3.50 each - which reflects the ever-rising cost of contents.

Orders must be in by Sunday 26th November please - or see me with your order at the Church Fair.

As always it is helpful if you can let me know adult/teenagers/children and male/female/non-specific.

Wishing you all a Blessed Christmas

Diana Hoy - dd.hoy@ntlworld.com

St Mary's Music News - December

Autumn is always very busy for the church and for the choir. However, the SMMA managed to squeeze in 2 coffee (and delicious! cake) concerts, an organ concert by Oli King on 11 October, followed a week later by a chamber choir from SWCHS with soloist Claire Middleton who sang songs from Scarlatti to Sondheim. These were not only enjoyable: they raised nearly £600 for music funds.

It was a great privilege to sing Sir John Tavener's "Mother of God Here I Stand" at morning service on 15 October when the first choir baby for many decades (Flora, daughter of soprano Helen and bass Matt) was baptised. Appropriately, this motet is based on a prayer by Mikhail Lermontov, asking Mary's protection for an innocent baby girl. Choir watchers may have noticed that none of us was sitting next to a person singing the same part. Your (soprano) writer really enjoyed the view from the bass stall, sandwiched between a bass and a tenor, as well as the luxury of 3 shelves rather than 2 for music to rest on. This arrangement required great concentration, but produced a magical sound.

In morning service at the end of October Assistant Organist Jeremy Allen received a presentation to mark his first 10 years at St Mary's, playing, conducting, supporting Oli King, and helping to train the organ scholars. We are looking forward to his second decade! Afterwards Peter and Caroline hosted a surprise Bring and Share lunch party for him.

In the same service, but at the other end of the experience scale, 4 of the junior choristers – Jaxon, Eleanor, Vivien and Ruta – received their surplices to mark their progress within the choir.



The long postponed visit of more than 30 members of the adult and junior choirs to sing Choral Evensong in Birmingham Cathedral on 4th November was a great success. It started with a welcome from David and

Jenny Tomlinson who kindly plied us with coffee and cakes when we arrived, and later came to the service, where we sang Stanford's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in B flat and Bairstow's "Save Us O Lord".

An event like this takes a great deal of organisation, from transport to refreshments to carriage of robes, and we are greatly indebted to everyone who smoothed the way. As the cathedral is undergoing extensive repairs, Oli decided to leave nothing to chance in his risk assessment. On 12 November the choir will be supporting the Remembrance Day service, and Compline with Words and Music. This year in particular wars and battles seem very close and the need for prayers and contemplation greater than ever.

Meanwhile, preparations are well underway for the Advent Carol service on 3 December, to be followed a mere 2 weeks later on 17 December by the more traditional Christmas Carol service of 9 Lessons and Carols. The choir is enjoying learning new

music from the Advent Carol book bought last year. And of course another date for your diary is the Epiphany Carol Service on 28 January. The music list we received at the end of October included 20 choir pieces to practise for these 3 services, plus of course the congregational hymns.

Otilie Lefever

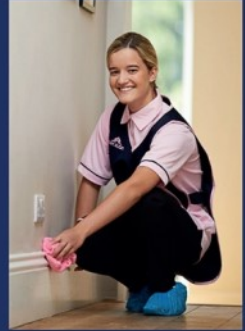
with photos from Jeremy Allen and Mark the Cathedral verger



New Editor of Parish News Sought

After 5 years in the role, I will be stepping down as editor of *Parish News* in September 2024. The right person to take over needs to have good word-processing skills and be happy to work to a monthly deadline. If you would like to know more, speak in the first instance to me and then to Martin Hugall, chairman of the Communications Committee.

Andy Colebrooke



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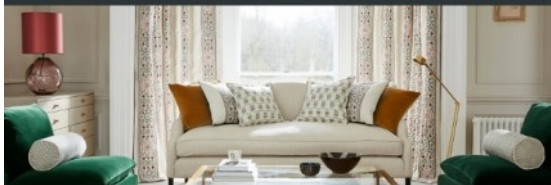
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Muniments Room

Archive Group

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

Compiled by our Archivist Canon Chris Bishop

From the Bishop. January 1948

A few days ago I was addressing a meeting for the 'Save Europe Now!' Society. We heard of the 13 million Germans driven out of their homes in what was called Sudeten-land and, other districts of Germany now occupied by Poland and Russia: homeless, workless and foodless, all herded into towns, many of which are in ruins: swelling the already underfed and even starving population of 120 million people. Do we ever give a thought to these miserable and hopeless people?

I ventured to suggest that we should send something to these people for Christmas: our extra Christmas rations, cast-off clothing, our sweet ration. I was astonished to receive a number of furious letters, full of abuse and ridicule. Such people (and surely they are few) seem to be quite ignorant of the elementary teaching of Christianity. 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him' – is unmistakably clear. Though, personally, I decline to call starving German women and children, shivering with cold, my enemies.

My correspondents told me to remember what they would have done to me if they could. Generally, I have found that these truculent persons suffered nothing at all in the war, and invariably I have found that our fighting men who risked their lives are the most forgiving... A nation in despair is the greatest enemy to world peace

(Name unknown)

Canon Chris Bishop. Archivist

The Hundred Parishes Society

Editor: The Hundred Parishes Society aims to increase awareness, enjoyment and care of the Hundred Parishes (450 square miles of northwest Essex, northeast Hertfordshire and southern Cambridgeshire). It is not a church-orientated organisation - "Parishes" referring to administrative parishes. The Society is interested in all things historical and local.

Two brothers born in north Wales in the 16th century have significant links with The Hundred Parishes. Thomas and Hugh Myddelton were younger sons of Richard, governor of Denbigh Castle. Both came to London to seek their fortune.

Thomas Myddelton was born in 1550, the fourth son. He did indeed make his fortune in trade and became Lord Mayor of London in 1613. In 1615, Thomas bought the manor of Stansted Mountfitchet as his country seat and began the erection of a new Stansted Hall. He died in 1631 and was buried at St Mary's Church. His funeral was lavish; the family even paid for the mourners to be suitably dressed. There is a fine memorial inside the church with a life-size effigy under a decorated arch.



*Thomas Myddelton memorial in
Stansted Mountfitchet Church*

Hugh Myddelton was born in 1560, the sixth son. In London, he was apprenticed to a goldsmith and later became Royal Jeweller to King James I. Hugh became a self-taught engineer. He was largely responsible for

construction of The New River which ran for some 20 miles, taking fresh water from springs near Great Amwell into London. He helped fund the project and also secured financial help from the king.



The New River at Great Amwell

The New River was opened in 1613, following the land contours so that gravity carried the water all the way to the Clerkenwell area of London. In 1620 a half mile extension was dug to supplement the supply by taking water from the nearby River Lea. After 400 years, the man-made New River still takes fresh water to the citizens of London; it is now operated by Thames Water.



Hugh Myddelton memorial at Great Amwell

Hugh Myddelton died in London in 1631. A memorial stone was erected on an island in the river at Great Amwell and various roads and properties along the route bear his name.

Ken McDonald, Secretary

QuinquaQuiz 2024

Dear Quizers,

the Quinqua Cup which at present is hopefully secure in a deep vault of a local Bank will be brought out again next year to be fought for during the QuinquaQuiz !

The date set for the Quiz next year is **Saturday February 10th 7 for 7.30 start**. Once again the Quiz will be made up of Teams of 6, each member paying £5 on the night. If you are interested in taking part please register your name or your proposed team at the Parish Office.

You bring your own drinks and nibbles and a good time is had by all, and all for a good cause. There will be reminders in the Grapevine nearer the time.

Money raised by the Quiz will be given to help **The Bishops Lent Appeal 2024**, and I will be able to give more details about that nearer the time.

Canon Chris Bishop, Quizmaster

Ecce Ancilla Domini

Dante Gabrielle Rossetti 1849 Tate Britain

This painting of the Annunciation has always troubled me. The perspective is so tight, so steep, it creates a sense of extreme claustrophobia and deep tension. The line of the edge of the bed is almost vertical while Mary cowers in the corner, retreating as far as she can from the wingless angel. This is far from the treatment of the subject by such painters as Fra Angelico, Fra Filippo Lippi or Titian. Mary here is petrified and defenceless rather than honoured and blessed.

Rossetti used his sister, Christina Rossetti, who eventually became one of England's great poets and author of 'In the Bleak Midwinter', as his model. At the age of twelve she suffered from persistent bronchitis. At fourteen she had a nervous breakdown followed by bouts of depression. When she posed for this painting at 17, I can well imagine that anorexia could be added to the list. She could not be a more vulnerable Mary.

Her wide, dark eyes are glazed over. There is no spark of vitality in them as she stares at the lily being offered to her and avoids the gaze of the angel. Her hair, though neatly parted, straggles in fine red threads over her white gown and shoulder, as if sticking after a hot and sweaty night from which she has just been awakened.

The painting is dominated by a white palette; almost oppressively so. This, together with the lily which the angel is holding and the embroidered

lilies, symbolise purity. Is her purity/virginity being over-emphasised? Here is a young, adolescent girl who really does not look ready for conception and childbirth!

The model for the angel was William, her elder brother. Instead of having the conventional wings, his feet hover on spiritual flames and, although naked beneath his robe, he makes a reassuring gesture with his left hand, above which hovers a small, haloed white dove.

There is a long and somewhat macabre history of gods seducing, raping or otherwise impregnating mortals. Zeus raped Europa disguised as a bull; he raped Leda when disguised as a swan as well as Callisto, Hera and Nemesis. In Irish mythology the great war hero Cuchulainn was the son of the Irish god Lugh and the mortal princess Deichtine. Members of the early Christian church will have been very familiar with such myths.

The Christian story of the Annunciation is very different, as if the ancient myths are being transposed into a new faith. There is no violence in the Christian version. No sense of rape or seduction, indeed sex does not form part of the narrative at all. And the offspring of the union is not a demi-god or war hero, but a full member of the Trinity, at one with His Father, destined to be passively executed.

Rossetti did not choose to call the painting *The Annunciation*, but rather 'Ecce Ancilla Domini' or 'Behold the Handmaid of the Lord:' the words of Mary in accepting her awesome role as mother of Jesus. My feeling is that Rossetti is making as great a contrast as he can between the enormity of the role and the cowering fragility of the girl that God has chosen. It is a pattern that is repeated throughout the New Testament: the most unlikely disciples are picked, the poorest are blessed; the last are to come first and the first to come last. Where Greek mythology deals with heroes and heroic acts on the battlefield, Christianity deals with anti-heroes and acts of self-sacrifice in modest and unassuming lives. Maybe it is not such an uncomfortable painting after all.

Edward Gildea

Photo: Edward Gildea



Everyone at St Mary's Church wishes you a peaceful and blessed Christmas

We warmly invite you to share in our Christmas services this year. The main services are listed below. Details of all the services for the Christmas period can be found at www.stmaryssaffronwalden.org/christmas

Advent Carol Service 6.30pm Sunday 3 December 2023.

Join with members of all the local churches for this special service of readings and carols by candlelight.

Christingle Service 4pm Sunday 10 December.

Oranges decorated with red tape, sweets and a candle are lit during this service. Children are especially welcome.

Christmas Carol Service 6.30pm Sunday 17 December.

A traditional service of bible readings and carols sung by the congregation and choir. Also on YouTube.

Blue Christmas Service 7.30pm Thursday 21 December.

A quiet service for anyone who finds it hard to buy into the forced merriment of Christmas, or wants space, or for whom this might be a difficult time of year.

Christmas Tree Service 4pm and 6pm Christmas Eve Sunday 24 December.

These services are particularly suitable for children. Children are welcome to dress as shepherds or angels to take part in the Christmas story. A collection will be shared between the Mayor's charities. Presents will be donated to children in a women's refuge – please don't wrap.

Midnight Communion 11.30pm Christmas Eve Sunday 24 Dcember.

The first communion service of Christmas.

Christmas Day Family Communion 10.30am Monday 25 December.

Join us to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ on this special day. Also on YouTube

