

Parish News

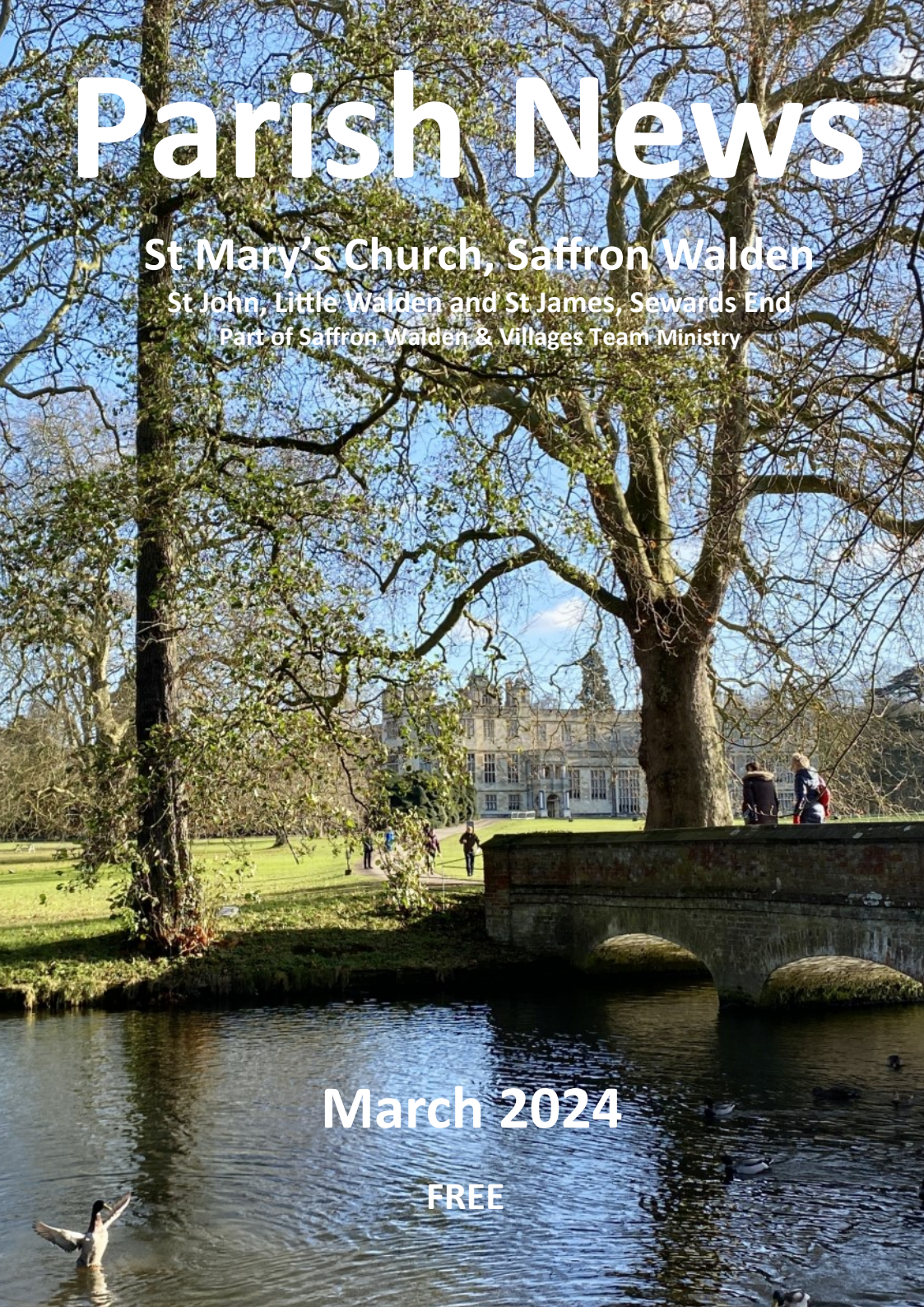
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March 2024

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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 **April** issue is **Sunday 3rd March**.

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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 photograph: Audley End House by Simon Ross

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The Rector's Letter

From The Rev'd Jeremy Trew
Jeremy writes...

The point of Lent is not denial.

But for a long time, I thought it was. Everything I heard about Lent revolved around the acts of self-denial. It was all about what object or habit one would give up and how hard it was to deny oneself of that thing. Of course, that denial was meant to help one think about God and Christ's sacrifice, but in truth the focus was always on the act of denial itself. The question always is, "what are you giving up for Lent?" as if that is what the season is about.



On one hand it's understandable that we miss the point of Lent. In our religious traditions rituals and legalism are far easier to promote, understand, and implement than spirituality and faith. We can grasp rules. It is far easier to tell kids to obey rules than to explain to them why they should desire to act rightly. They then end up following the rules simply because the rules exist. When it comes to Lent, we often do the same – denying ourselves something for the sake of denial. We give up chocolate thinking that act of denial is the purpose of Lent. And we end up missing the point.

But Lent isn't about denial, it is about transformation. It is the season in which we prepare to encounter Christ's sacrifice by endeavouring to become more Christ like ourselves. Transformation is about letting ourselves be filled with God's presence so that we can be shaped by God's grace. Our acts of kenosis – denying ourselves in order to empty ourselves enough to allow God to fill us – are means to an end. They are disciplines that prepare us to be transformed. We deny ourselves so that we can be reborn as new creations – to live more fully as the Kingdom citizens God desires us to be.

So I am very tentative in choosing what disciplines I will follow during Lent to open myself up to God's transforming power. I've discovered that for me personally, legalistic denial for the sake of denial often achieves the opposite purpose. Giving up coffee doesn't make me a better follower of Christ; it just makes me more irritable. Such disciplines don't assist me in emptying myself in order to let God in; they simply fill me with more of me.

I've come to learn that in order to become more fully the person God wants me to be, I instead need to make sacrifices that actually allow me to

achieve those ends. Often those sacrifices are less about personal denial, and more about following disciplines that encourage me to love others more. In the past I've attempted to eat more ethically or shop fairly – which of course required discipline and sacrifice on my part (and a bit of denial as well), but the outcome of these outwardly focused changes was far more personally transformative than if I had just eliminated something from my life for forty days.

So, for me the question for Lent is not “what am I giving up?” but instead “what can I do to allow God to transform me this season?” The answers to those questions might be the same for some people, for me changing the question shifted how I observed Lent. Whatever the case, I think it is important to understand what the ultimate purpose is behind why we engage in certain disciplines unless we miss their very point.

Best wishes

Jeremy



A Prayer for Lent

provided by the Prayer Team



Lord of the desert, we praise you;
Lord of the mountains and sea, we praise you;
Lord of the city, we praise you.

Be with us, Lord,
as we journey from wilderness towards the cross,
from the cross to the glory of the resurrection.

Be the light on our path
and the rest at our journey's end,
we pray.
Amen.

Short Termism could be the end of us...

When our ancestors in Saffron Walden built St Mary's they could have had little idea of how long their creation would last. They worked for the glory of God for a future they couldn't possibly imagine. Many of the stone masons and labourers in cathedrals around the world never saw their work completed. There is a delightful phrase for such long-term perspectives: 'Cathedral Thinking'.



Sadly, society in this country and around the world, is lacking in 'Cathedral Thinking'. Great civilizations build for great time frames, way beyond the economic or pragmatic needs of the present. Thank goodness the Victorians, building our sewage systems and railways, also built for posterity. Our politicians, however, think in very short time frames, specifically the desire to get re-elected in 3 or 4 years' time.

Such short termism is reflected in promises of tax cuts, which will no doubt intensify as we approach the General Election, as politicians try to win popularity regardless of the consequences. Those costs and consequences will become the liability of future generations.

It seems that such short termism is an inevitable component of democracy. Long term interests are necessarily side-lined in favour of vote-winning. To get elected you have to court popularity which means that democracy struggles to

address the Climate Crisis. It seems that international collaboration is equally incapable of mandating effective action to address the crisis: national self-interests result in loopholes being built into most agreed statements.

So if neither democracy nor international collaboration are well placed to ensure the future of humanity, where should we place our trust? The Church is doing its best to show leadership, with its target of reaching carbon zero by 2030, but compared to the immense financial resources of multi-national corporations, its influence is peripheral... Unless we can really change hearts and minds.

It is not going to be the carbon footprint of heating and lighting our magnificent church that makes the difference, but the changed mindsets and lifestyles of the congregation, their families and friends and the friends of those friends in an ever-widening circle. Because let's face it: politicians don't actually lead. They tune in to what seems to be popular in the press and in the polls and then follow those trends, pretending that they have taken the 'difficult decisions.' So how about becoming a trend-setter?

For those struggling on tight budgets, and a recent report says that there are 6 million people in the UK living in 'very deep poverty'* , the short termism of surviving from day to day is the only option. But those of us who are more comfortably off can perhaps give more consideration to our legacy. As we enjoy the benefits of those who bequeathed us St Mary's, perhaps we should ask, "What will future generations think of the legacy we leave?"

Edward Gildea, Eco Team Leader

*Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty Report 2024

Photograph: St Mary's Chancel Roof by Simon Ross

New Editor of Parish News Needed

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. It's a job that might suit two working as a team.

If you would like to know more, you can speak to me about the job, then to Martin Hugall, chairman of the Communications Committee.

Andy Colebrooke

**6 issues to
go!**

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The Role of a Welcomer at St Mary's

Graceful and elegant as a swan.....

Welcomers, previously known as Sidesmen, perform a vital role in the life of St Mary's and I wondered if everyone was aware of quite what they do, so here goes..... As the title suggests the primary role, and the one you see at each service, is to welcome the congregation at almost all the services. People come to Church for a variety of reasons such as tourists, those looking for a regular place of worship, to give thanks, to hear banns read or as regular worshippers. Welcomers need to be sensitive to all of these needs and be available if and where possible to give support even if it is just to someone who wants a little chat, they may not have spoken to anyone all week.

They will invite newcomers to join us all for coffee after the service and point out facilities and leaflet stands. Point out the children's area and offer activity bags and give information with reference to Wiggle Church.

Each new Welcomer is given a "Ministry of Welcome at Sunday Services" 18 page document which lists all the tasks. At first sight that looks onerous but it soon becomes routine and includes tasks like, setting up, collating the handout paperwork for the service, doing the collection, showing baptism families to their reserved seats, being watchful during the service to be available to assist anyone who needs help and of course saying goodbye to everyone and then clearing the pews of paperwork and lost property. For the 10.30am services each team has a Team Leader who co-ordinates all the tasks.

Welcomers are offered Fire Warden Training and many have taken up that additional role. This is required when we have teams working on the Christmas services for instance where the congregation has candles. Yes these services are extra tasks enthusiastically taken on by the Welcomers and Christmas can be a very busy time. Welcomers are the lighting team as candle lighters, as well as ushers and many other tasks.

The Remembrance service also requires at least a dozen Welcomers including a "heavy team" to move some of the furniture and put out all the spare chairs, and put them away again of course.

Next Sunday when you come to Church give them a smile, as they will appreciate it I'm sure. Here is the rub, we are all getting older and we need to recruit more people to help to spread the load. We are a great team who all work well together, both in their particular teams and at special services. We take our role seriously but we also have fun so why not consider joining us even on a trial basis and see what you think. (pjmteddybear@btinternet.com) Also, think about that *graceful and elegant swan* there to greet you, whose feet are working like crazy under the water, the part you don't see.

Pamela Mugliston, Welcome Co-ordinator

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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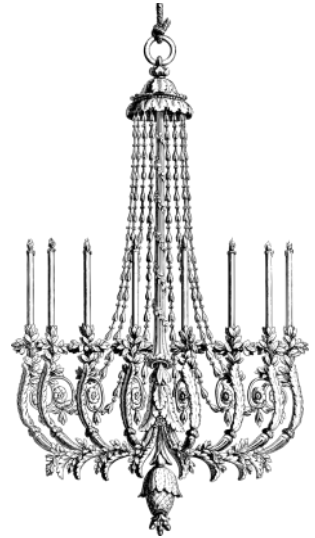
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Consultation on Proposed New Lighting to Start Soon

The December 2023 edition of the Parish News included an update about the lighting in the church and the progress being made by St Mary's Lighting Team. The Team has continued to make good progress and we will soon be sharing information more widely on the design ideas and what the new lighting might look like.

Following PCC approval, we awarded the contract to produce a concept design, which shows the overall "look and feel" of the new lighting, to Bruce Kirk from Light Perceptions. Bruce and his team generated the design and provided the final version by mid-December and this was presented to our PCC in January. The design was well received and we met with the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) at St Mary's today to present the ideas to them.



The DAC is the "Planning Committee" for the Diocese; every Diocese has one, and it reviews the technical details of changes proposed to churches. Without DAC support, our Lighting Design is unlikely to go forward. We met at 4:30pm by which time the lighting in the church needed to be switched on which resulted in the DAC members present to comment that "the current lighting does nothing to enhance the building" and "we can see why it needs to be replaced." While there is a lot more detail to be worked up to get to a final design and full DAC approval, they were very positive towards what they saw and acknowledged that we are on the right track.

We also need to consult with Historic England, Church Buildings Council (CBC) and the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings whose advice will be taken into consideration by DAC. CBC have already responded with very positive, supportive comments and we await comments from the others. So, what's next?

At our next meeting, the Lighting Team will be discussing how to consult on the proposed lighting design with the congregation, wider membership of St Mary's and more widely across the town. We hope to be able to do this in March and April and will provide more details as soon as we can. Watch this space and/or The Grapevine and St Mary's website!

Improvements and repairs in a grade I listed building of national significance like St Mary's are not cheap and our Fundraising Team has met

twice to assess which Trusts and Foundations we might approach for a grant. There are quite a few and shortly we'll be contacting them to check the eligibility of our project before making formal grant requests. We cannot make applications until we have a detailed design and a firm cost, which will be in the second half of this year, but we are using the time until then to research our options. In the meantime, we have already had one success with the Diocese awarding a grant of £2,250 towards the cost of the concept design which was £3,995 plus VAT.

The Church of England has also announced grant funding for carbon net zero projects and we're keeping a close eye on whether we might qualify for these. Replacing our current lighting with LEDs will save a lot of energy and significantly reduce our carbon footprint from our electricity usage. We could be high on the list for CoE funding because these are being focused on church buildings with the highest energy usage. Out of the over 16,000 Anglican church buildings in England, St Mary's has been identified as one of the top 600 churches in the country with respect to how much electricity and gas we use. This isn't surprising because St Mary's is one of the 300 largest churches in the country, and we can start to reduce the carbon we generate by replacing our lighting, which is the item which consumes the majority of the electricity in the church.

How can you help? We are very keen to hear what you have to say about the concept design, please do engage when we consult more widely. Also, we are keen to have some more members on the Fundraising Team. If you're good with paperwork and form filling, you could help us with a grant application or two. If you think you may be able to help to move this project forward, help make a huge difference to the welcome we offer and to the ambience and atmosphere in St Mary's, please do feel free to talk with me to find out more.

Steve Hasler

Illustration by Gordon Johnson from Pixabay (not part of the proposed scheme!)

Smile Lines...

I asked my nephew whether he bought his wife anything for Valentine's Day, and he said he had bought her a belt and a bag. When I commented that I am sure she would appreciate them, he agreed: "Yes, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now."



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

THE FRIENDS CATHEDRAL TRIPS

On April 8th we are off to Rochester Cathedral, the 2nd largest Cathedral in the UK so we look forward to that; I hope you are able to join us. Rochester is a town with lots of history to explore in the afternoon. Watch out for a Cathedral visit late summer which is planned to include lunch by the river and a boat trip, full details to follow. Is there a Cathedral you would like us to add to our list; we are always open to suggestions?

ARCHIVE BOX: You may have noticed a new feature each first Sunday next to the Vestry door? Canon Chris Bishop, our Archivist, will be showing new displays each month from his collection of pieces of interest; do come and have a look. The display box Chris uses has been supplied by The Friends.

FUND RAISER: We are looking for ideas for a fund raiser in the summer, do you have any? Would you like to take part? Please let Pamela know on pjmteddybear@btinternet.com

NEXT ISSUE OF OUR FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

This will be with you any time now, with all the news from this last year including our big Open Day event, lots of new members and the new Archive Project. Copies will be emailed to all members but there will be some hard copies on the Welcome Bookstand.

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For further information please contact Ros Darton or Rita Williams on 01799 551046

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 10.30am services.

Friday 1 March

2pm Mothers' Union Women's World Day of Prayer at SW Baptist Church

Sunday 3 March

8am BCP Holy Communion

9.15am Wiggle Church in Parish Rooms

10.30am Holy Communion [Y]

6.30pm H2H: Youth-led Service for all in Parish Rooms

Wednesday 6 March

11.30am Coffee Concert - *Philip Sutherland - Organ*

7.30pm Lectio Lent Course in Parish Rooms

Thursday 7 March

10am Silent Prayer in North Chapel

2pm River Through the Desert (Lent Course) - North Chapel

Mothering Sunday 10 March

8am BCP Holy Communion

10.30am Second Sunday Holy Communion [Y]

Wednesday 13 March

11.30am Coffee Concert - *Emmanuel Bach - Violin*

7.30pm Lectio Lent Course in Parish Rooms

Thursday 14 March

2pm Mothers' Union - Meditation Service

2pm River Through the Desert (Lent Course) - North Chapel

Sunday 17 March

8am BCP Holy Communion

10.30am Holy Communion [Y]

4pm Living Stones Service in Parish Rooms

Wednesday 20 March

11.30am Coffee Concert - *SWCHS Music Academy*

7.30pm Lectio Lent Course in Parish Rooms

Thursday 21 March

2pm River Through the Desert (Lent Course) - North Chapel

Holy Week

Palm Sunday 24 March

8am BCP Holy Communion [Y]

10.30am Family Service

4pm Choral Evensong with Passion Reading



Monday 25 March

9.30am Holy Communion
7.30pm Bible Study and Compline

Tuesday 26 March

9am Holy Communion
5pm Evening Prayer by Zoom: login details from Parish Office
7.30pm Bible Study and Compline

Wednesday 27 March

8am Morning Prayer
9.30am Holy Communion
7.30pm Bible Study and Compline

Maundy Thursday 28 March

9.30am Holy Communion
7.30pm Choral Eucharist

Good Friday 29 March

10.30am Procession of Witness
2pm An Hour at the Cross
7.30pm Devotional Offering: St Mary's choir and musicians, including 'Fauré Requiem'.

Easter Day 31 March

6am Dawn Holy Communion
8am BCP Holy Communion
10.30am Easter Communion [Y]
6.30pm Choral Evensong

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)



St James', Sewards End

Sunday 3 March

10.30am Holy Communion & ACM

Sunday 10 March

10.30am Morning Praise

Good Friday 29th March

12pm Hour at the Cross

Easter Day 31 March

10.30am Easter Communion

St John's, Little Walden

Sunday 10 March

10.30am Family Service

Easter Day 31 March

10.30am Easter Communion

Rev'd Robin Paxon - 1946 to 2024

During the late 1970's, when Arthur Rodwell was Rector at St Mary's, a young 'Biker' with a fun attitude arrived to be our new Curate and he lived in the then Curate's house in Saxon Way. We and others at the time befriended him and one could rely on seeing his biking boots under his cassock. He became our son's Godfather.

After the usual curacy period he moved on to his own Parish in Plaistow, East London, to a newly built vicarage in a poor area - which was very difficult for an unmarried vicar and there were many occasions of violence.

After a few difficult years he was appointed priest in charge at St Paul's Parkeston - not far from where John and Dawn Saxon now live. In July 1987 he married Patricia - and she wore a beautiful royal blue dress! The boy in the photograph is our son Elyot, who is Robin's Godson.



He continued to care for the souls at St Paul's until he suddenly during Easter 1993 lost most of the sight in both eyes. This caused him great difficulties in life and with his faith and leading the worship at St Paul's, though Patricia was a wonderful support. Unfortunately, the Diocese at the time expected him to continue without assistance and eventually Robin had to retire from the Ministry.

In the years that followed, he and Patricia lived a quiet life in Dovercourt by the sea and we visited from time to time or he came here for a few days. He had a succession of lovely guide dogs until he felt he was too old to care for them and he was a relentless and brave campaigner for those who had lost their sight - he was also an excellent cook! - and a lovely man. Rest in Peace.

Diana & David Hoy



Gelio's Anthology of Obscure Proverbs

An English Proverb on wealth and then a Roman Proverb on riches: -

'The greatest wealth is contentment with little.'

and

'Riches are like salt water, the more you drink the more you thirst.'

YOUinthe**PEW** interviewed by Chris Bishop



Margaret Barnes

My mother was born in Leighton Spa, where her mother then died in the Spanish Flu epidemic shortly afterwards. She was then adopted and eventually brought up in Devon. My birth in 1939, as a war baby, was in Bideford, in Devon. However, due to 'circumstances' my parents separated when I was about 4 years old. My father, who was given custody of me, was in the RAF, stationed at Biggin Hill on the Searchlights, and my Gran brought me up until he was demobbed. My brother who was about 6 months old was sent to a children's home, and later adopted. Early life was hard.

I was then brought up in South East London by my Gran and my Dad. I have happy memories of that time, cycling, climbing trees, being a girl guide etc. After my school years I went into nurse training and studied for my RGN, and then my CMB certificate. Here I met my first husband, a trained Psychiatric Nurse. We both happily belonged to the local Plymouth Brethren Chapel, and had lots of Christian friends. We soon decided to emigrate and left the UK for South Africa, where we spent 15 years and had three children, we also continued to worship with the Brethren. However, years later, when the marriage was not doing well we moved over to the USA for two years, where we then joined the Assemblies of God before returning to the UK.

We had chosen Saffron Walden because on educational listings the County High School was one of the top comprehensives in the country. Eventually the marriage fell apart, we had a civilised divorce, and I was left for 10 years in a small house in Great Chesterford, to care for the three children, and run the home, on a nurse's salary! This was also when I trained as a Health Visitor, a career I enjoyed. Then I met a lovely man who went to the same local Wellspring Evangelical Chapel as me.



Thirty-two years ago, Rufus and I were married and we moved to Saffron Walden. I remember clearly our wedding day in the Baptist Church. Rufus employed by London Travel Watch, managed to borrow 'The Super Car'. A large vehicle in three parts, a third bus, a third underground train, and a third National rail to transport me and guests to the church, its journey up the M11 caused quite a stir, and got into the paper. By now the children were self-sufficient, and Rufus decided to take six months unpaid leave and we went off to Bible School in Jerusalem. We both then felt the Lord was telling us to share what we had learnt about His continued love for the Jewish people and we decided on our return to worship nearer home. After a while at the Baptist Church, where we were married, we moved on to St Marys, where we have been ever since.

A good motto to go by can be found in the book of 2 Chronicles Ch15 v7. "Never give up" (NIV)

From the Registers

Funerals

12 January

Linda Hunt

Barclays Appease Mothers' Union



Saffron Walden M.U. has been debanked! Like many other small community/business accounts ours was closed in September. This was despite the best efforts of our Treasurer, St Mary's Parish Administrator and the Rector, to prove who we are (and so avoid the charge of money-laundering). A lengthy "one size fits all" form was filled in where relevant, protracted phone calls took place and letters were sent.

However, protests finally resulted in an apology from Barclays and two smart hessian bags of goodies were sent - tied-up with white satin ribbon! The M.U. members will be enjoying Barclays largesse at forthcoming meetings.

Gwynneth Nicolas

What will March bring?

Mental health ideas for uncertain times

We may all have rather mixed feelings on reaching March this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, but the wars in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza grind on, as does the cost-of-living crisis. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

Getting outside

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying Creation can also help us connect with God.



Looking outside

If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

Lament and praise

The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

Journaling

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

Acts of kindness

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

Laugh, sing, make music, dance

All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.

Dr Ruth M Bancewicz

The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge

Photo by Riccardo on pexels.com

St Mary's Music News - March 2024 (written 4 February)

The Epiphany Carol Service on 28 January started quietly with Moles' O Tribus Miraculis and the lilting French version of Away in A Manger with a quintet including the Junior Choir's Flo and Poppy. The volume grew as the stone rafters rang with the triumphant chords of Mathias' modern carol A Babe is Born, matched by the Victorian solemnity of Wood's O Thou the Central Orb. The choir also gave, not quite a premiere, but certainly an early performance of Pike's Epiphany, starring "wise travellers from the east, Each riding on a splendid beast And richly dressed, as for a feast To greet a newborn King".

Away from formal services, the SMMA is sponsoring its latest series of Wednesday coffee concerts. In February the SWCHS Music Academy's performance was followed by Mercadante Duo on clarinet and piano. On 6 March Philip Sunderland is giving an organ concert, on 13 March Emmanuel Bach will be performing on the violin, and 20 March sees the return of the SWCHS Music Academy. Coffee, tea and cakes are available from 10.45 am. The concerts start at 11.30 and last for around 40 minutes.

Another key area for the SMMA is supporting the Michael Swindlehurst Organ Scholar. This is how the third scholar, Ziyi, describes her first term in the role:

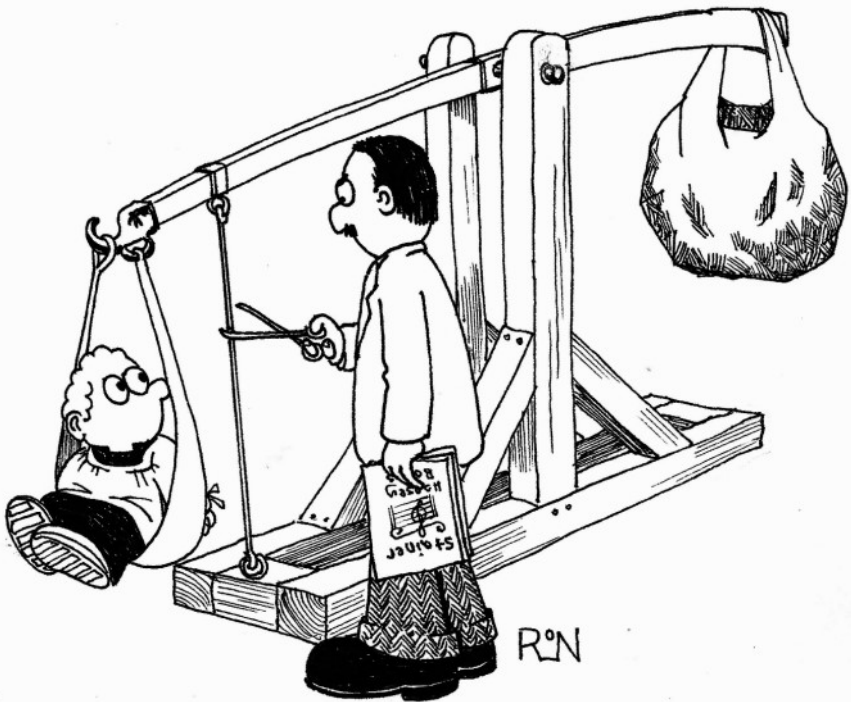
"I really enjoy being the organ scholar, because it has taught me so many new skills. For example, I've learnt many ways of improvisation, and recently I also learned how to conduct. Once a month I play for services at Wendens Ambo which allows me to explore what playing for a full service is like, and how to manage my music independently for it. Additionally, nearly every week, I play a hymn for services or small pieces before or during it, and this has all built up my confidence in playing during services and for a large number of people. Oli and Jeremy have been very helpful with this in making me feel comfortable playing, and encouraging my progress. I've learned a lot about how to play for services from observing them, and also how to play for/direct the choir as a whole. Each week I have organ lessons with Oli - I really enjoy these due to the wide range of music and skills we cover, and how I can choose what to focus on for each week. Oli has been really encouraging with developing my organ and conducting skills. The people in the choir are also all very friendly and welcoming, giving me lots of helpful advice and also making me feel comfortable at St Mary's."

Meanwhile the choir is supporting worship throughout Lent, starting on Ash Wednesday. The next Choral Evensong is on Sunday 24 March at the

winter time of 4pm. That will be followed at 7.30 pm on Good Friday 29 March by a Devotional Offering of Faure's Requiem, and finish with Choral Evensong on Easter Day at 6.30 pm.

And finally, a brief mention that the SMMA AGM will not take place in March as usual because for good practical reasons we aim to synchronise with the AGM of the PCC. As that is being held in May, the SMMA AGM will be correspondingly delayed. Once the date is fixed it will be published in the Parish Magazine and on the noticeboards inside the Church and outside the Parish Rooms as well as in the Grapevine.

Otilie Lefever



Toby persistently sang flat



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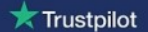
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Archive Group

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

Compiled by our Archivist Canon Chris Bishop

March 1876

The Vicar would be glad if Subscriptions for the past year could at once be paid to Mr. Freestone. Although about 350 copies are now being sold every month, the Magazine does not pay its way, the account for 1875 showing a *deficit* of about £5; and the loss would have been twice as great, had it not been for a donation from a person not connected with the Parish. The Vicar feels that it would not be right for him to bear the burden of such a *deficit*.

(Archivist. The Magazine cost Two- Pence)

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Lent

Our Saviour's example, together with His commands as to fasting, and His abiding Presence with the teaching of the Church, suggests to us how desirable it is for Christians to keep such a season as Lent – a season during which we may abstain from our usual enjoyments, in order to go apart with CHRIST, and may practise special self-denial, so as to have more to bestow upon CHRIST'S poor. The Parishioners are invited to attend, during these forty days, some of the week-day services, according as they have opportunity - more particularly, evening prayer on Wednesdays (when sermons will be preached chiefly by Clergy from other Parishes) or on Fridays, when a course of addresses, intended chiefly for working men, will be given by the Vicar. There will also be services, with ministerial instruction, at Audley End School, on Tuesday evenings at 7.30 and at the Parish Church (for women of all classes) on Tuesday afternoons at 3.....

Canon Chris Bishop
Archivist

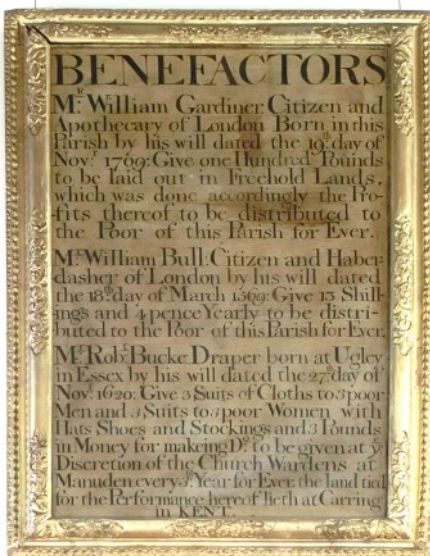
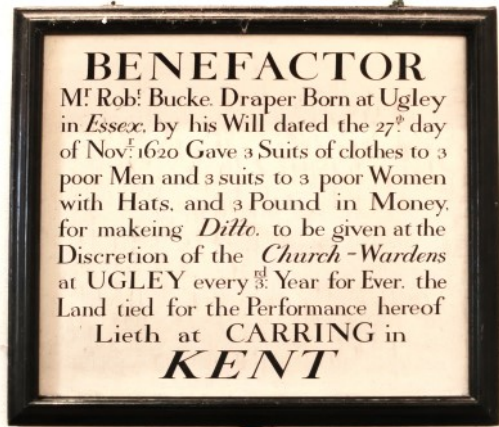
The Hundred Parishes Society

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.

~*~

We are fortunate today that we have a benefit system to help vulnerable people. In the past, the less fortunate relied on parish relief or the generosity of the better-off. Some wealthy benefactors left money for the provision of almshouses. You can see an article on almshouses on the Hundred Parishes website at www.hundredparishes.org.uk.

Other philanthropists helped the poor by giving money in a variety of ways.



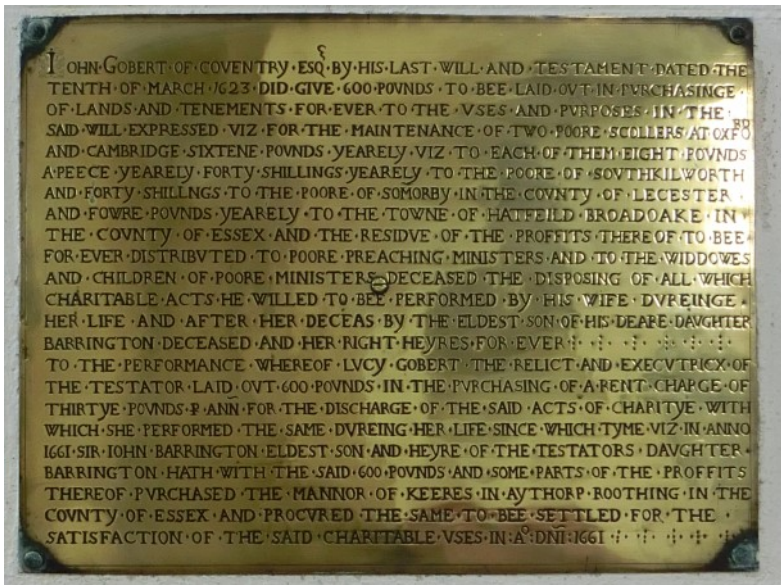
Some churches record the benevolence of these donors on large "benefactor" boards.

For example, in St Peters, Ugley we are told on one board that Robert Bucke, a draper, in his will of 1620 gave 3 suits of clothes to 3 poor men and 3 suits to 3 poor women with hats, to be given every third year "for ever".

Just a few miles away in Manuden's parish church, a board describes three benefactors, one of whom is the same Robert Bucke. Here he gives the same number of suits to the poor of Manuden, here with additional hats, shoes and stockings.



In Little Hadham the church of St. Cecilia has a board recording that Miss Ann Scott, in her 1865 will, left dividends to the rector and church wardens to distribute bread on Shrove Sunday each year “at their discretion” to the poor of the Parish.



Hatfield Broad Oak’s Church of St Mary the Virgin has a brass plaque describing the generosity of John Gobert. He left £600 in his will of 1623 for the purchase of land, the proceeds from which were to be distributed in a variety of ways including £4 per annum to the town of Hatfield Broad Oak. His heir Sir John Barrington subsequently bought the manor of Keeres in Aythorpe Roothing to comply with the will.

Please look out for more proclamations of generosity.

Ken McDonald, Secretary

The Creation of Adam

The stunning Creation of Adam by Michelangelo in the Sistine Chapel is very familiar (see Fig. 1). God, swooping, full of dynamic energy; Adam, a perfectly honed specimen (without once having to visit a gym!) lethargically raising his arm to receive the life force from his Creator. Over two hundred years before Stephen Gray's early experiments with electricity, Michelangelo seems to have understood that there would be greater power and energy if their fingers did *not* touch, adding to the sense of miracle and mystery – a mystery of life that we still haven't solved.

Contrast that with William Blake's version (Fig. 2). Adam is spreadeagled in crucified posture in utter despair. He is born into physicality and is already bound by the snake because, of course, God has already decided that he should fall. The sky is heavy with clouds, rigid and geometric, adding to the sense of doom and claustrophobia. And God himself is not flying with dramatic freedom. He is made of stone, a heavy, rigid form, weighing heavily on Adam as together they are enclosed in the orb of a darkening sun. It is a very bleak, negative depiction.

Blake, however, is depicting the false God, Urizen, and his act of Creation is described as one which cut us off from our eternal, infinite, spiritual identities. Our 'fountain of thought' is imprisoned in the orb of our skull and our senses are like chinks through which we perceive infinity but never reach it:

All the myriads of Eternity
 All the wisdom and joy of Life
 Roll like a sea around him
 Except what his little orbs
 Of sight by degrees unfold.

This painful Creation in Blake's prophetic poem, 'Urizen', expresses his revolutionary anger at a world of injustice and cruelty presided over by a false, judgemental and repressive church which he describes in 'The Garden of Love':

...the gates of this Chapel were shut,
 And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
 So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore.
 And I saw it was filled with graves,
 And tomb-stones where flowers should be:

And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys & desires.



Blake's revolutionary faith is enviable. His death was described by George Richmond: 'He said he was going to that Country he had all His life wished to see & expressed Himself Happy, hoping for Salvation through Jesus Christ. Just before he died His Countenance became fair. His eyes Brighten'd and he burst out Singing of the things he saw in Heaven.'

His poems and art raise profound questions about the true nature of the Church and God. Once we have dismissed the notion of an elderly bearded man flying through the sky rather like Santa Claus, we have serious thinking to do!

Edward Gildea

Photographs: 1) Sistine Chapel, Public Domain, 2) Tate Gallery, image released under Creative Commons CC-BY-NC-ND (3.0 Unported)

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St John, Little Walden and St James, Swards End



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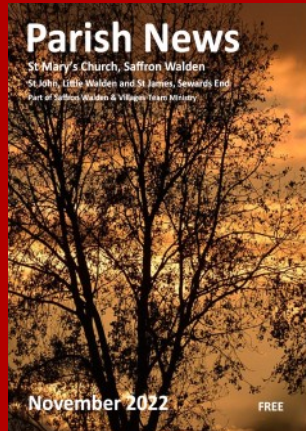


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