

# Saints ALIVE

*The magazine of:  
All Saints, Leighton Buzzard  
St. Nicholas, Hockliffe  
St. Michael's, Eggington  
St. Michael and All Angels,  
Billington  
The Good Shepherd, Sandhills*

*February 2021*

*70p*

## **Inside:**

In this topsy-turvy World of Covid, where none of us knows which way is up, we thought you might enjoy this photo by Leighton Buzzard resident, David Perkins.

For more of David's work, see Mother Cate's article on p3; and go to [instagram.com/leighton\\_buzzard\\_360/](https://www.instagram.com/leighton_buzzard_360/)

Also in this issue:

Centrefold Spread:  
looking at some of the curiosities to be found around All Saints, starting with the Samaritan Window.

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Celebrate the little wins,  
and let hope carry you through:  
Jo Bellamy  
reflects on our capacity to endure.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gonville French-Beytagh,  
first in a new series of  
personal spiritual heroes.

\*\*\*\*\*



# All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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## *Lent in an inside out, upside down world*

*By Rev'd Cate Irvine*



February is a turning point in the Christian Year. We begin with our celebrations of Candlemas, the presentation of Christ in the Temple. It is the culmination of the Season of Epiphany as we see the light of God revealed to all the world in Jesus. The Candlemas service ends with an acknowledgement that we then turn our eyes towards Lent which begins shortly after. This year I suspect that we would all feel much happier if we were moving from Lent into a season of celebration rather than the other way around. It feels as though we have enough restrictions on our lives without looking to add others.

My theme for Lent this year is “Inside Out” which I have chosen for several reasons.



Firstly, that sense of the world being upside down and back to front is how many people are feeling and it seems important to recognise that in our keeping of Lent.

Secondly, Lent is a time when we think about the inside and outside of things. We recognise that our outward behaviours have a real impact on our inner life and vice versa.

Finally, it is a recognition that things are not always what they seem.

With the last vestiges of winter in this year of the pandemic this last point it really important to hold on to. What we are feeling at the moment is a profound sense of the loss and the brokenness of the world. In Lent we will face these themes head on. I firmly believe that Lent holds real potential for healing and renewal and for us to share the wisdom of our faith with the wider world.

It is a time when we look at our inner lives with as much honesty as we can manage, and we are able to do this because we know that God has already accepted what we will find there even if we haven't. The story of the cross is one of transforming love. What seems to the world like loss and shame is the very path through which God leads us to new life.

So in Lent we look inwards, to free us from the shadows in our lives by the recognition that God already knows and looks beyond them. Our response to that freedom and love becomes the catalyst for a change in how we live our lives. At the same time we change the pattern of our outer lives because that discipline can change how we see ourselves, others and God. Outside and in, inside and out, Lent is a time of healing and renewal. The path set before us may not be easy or make sense to others, but we walk it trusting in God and certain that at the end is the risen life that we will celebrate at Easter but which is always with us.

***Mother Cate.***

## *Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team*

### **All Saints**

#### **Sundays:**

**Please note new times which allow for cleaning between services**

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday (until Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2021):

All Age "Service with a difference"

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday Holy Baptism

6pm Said Evening Prayer

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: followed by Benediction

#### **Weekdays:**

##### **Holy Communion**

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday)

12.00pm Wednesday (**Not presently happening.**)

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

**Morning Prayer:** St. Hugh's Chapel

9.00am Monday – Friday

**Evening Prayer:** St. Hugh's Chapel

4.30pm Monday – Friday

##### **St. Barnabas, Linslade**

#### **Sundays:**

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

[www.linslade-parish.org.uk](http://www.linslade-parish.org.uk)

**During Lockdown, services in Heath & Reach, Eggington and Hockliffe are being shared by Zoom from the vicarage at 10am.**

**For details please contact Fr Noel McGeeney.**

##### **St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

8am Holy Communion

For details please visit:

[www.saintleonardschurch.com](http://www.saintleonardschurch.com)

##### **St. Michael's, Eggington**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

##### **St. Nicholas', Hockliffe**

#### **Sundays: Occasional services**

##### **St. Michael's and All Angels, Billington**

#### **Sundays:**

11.15am Morning Prayer

##### **Good Shepherd, Greenleas School, Sandhills:**

**Sundays** at 9.45am:

1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup>: Communion

2<sup>nd</sup>: Messy Church

4<sup>th</sup>: All Age Worship

*During Lockdown, All Saints is open for 10am*

*Thursday Eucharist,*

*which is not broadcast.*

*9.30am Sunday Eucharist, which is broadcast on*

*the All Saints' You Tube channel;*

*and is followed by Zoom Coffee at 11am;*

*For details of services and all other events,*

*please see the websites.*

**Sunday Saints:** for age 3+ year olds, meets during 9.30am Sunday service at All Saints.

**All Saints Toddler Time:** meets in All Saints on Wednesdays during term time.

Morning session 9.30 – 11am every week; afternoon session 1.30pm-3pm, except 1<sup>st</sup> Weds of month.

£1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included: **will restart in October**

**ACTIVE:** (Senior Youth Group for age 11+) **not meeting at present because of a lack of leaders.**

**If you could help, please contact the office.**

**Young Adults:** meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 8pm. See Facebook page "All Saints Young Adults".

**Bereavement Café:** a support group offering friendship and understanding.

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the month, 2.30-4pm The Spire Coffee Shop, All Saints

**Choir Practice:** Friday evenings, 7pm for 30 minutes for all members.

**Bellringers:** Practice on Monday, 7.30pm-9.30pm.

**Spire Coffee Shop:** Tuesday, Friday & Saturday 10am-2pm.

*Contact Details on Page 2.*

## News Roundup

During Lockdown, services being held in All Saints  
at 10am on Thursday; and 9.30am on Sunday.

The Sunday service is also broadcast on the All Saints You Tube channel  
<https://allsaintslb.org.uk/>

Zoom Coffee on Sunday mornings 11-12am:

To join by phone, call 0203 481 5240; Online: Meeting ID: 875 602 910 Passcode: 000000



## Worth a smile: House Hunting

*From Christian Crackers, a collection by Phil Mason and supplied by a Saints Alive subscriber.*



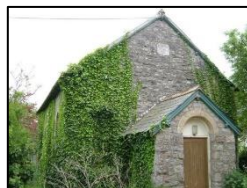
With a view to buying a pleasant country cottage, a young married couple went to the vicar of a small rural parish in Somerset and asked him if such a cottage was available. The vicar showed them round one and asked if they would let him know their decision. Later however they remembered that they had not noticed a WC in the cottage, so the young man wrote to the vicar and enquired where this might be. The vicar, however, was not familiar with the term W.C. and wrote them the following letter, taking it that they were meaning WESLEYAN CHAPEL.

*[Why this vicar is moonlighting as an estate agent is not clear - Ed!]*

Dear Sir,

I was very pleased to receive your letter, but regret to inform you that the nearest W.C. in your area is 50 miles away, which is most unfortunate if you are in the habit of going regularly.

This one is a lovely little place, situated in a beautiful valley amongst pine trees, and it may interest you to know that many people make a day of it, setting off early and taking meals with them. Some travel by car or bus; others walk and arrive just in time. A bell rings 20 minutes before the W.C. opens, and there is plenty of standing room for those who arrive late.



Inside, everything is most appropriate with 80 plush seats and beautiful carvings on the walls. The children sit and sing during the procedure. Hymn sheets are found hanging behind the door, and there is organ accompaniment.

I hope this information has been useful to you and that you will make it your business to attend often. I myself have not been for five months, and you can imagine that this pains me very much.

Yours faithfully,  
The vicar.

Photos:  
Robert Katz on [Unsplash](https://www.unsplash.com/)  
& Derek Harper, reproduced under common licence.

# Parish Registers

## Holy Matrimony:

There were no weddings in December 2020 or January 2021.

*'Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate'*

## Holy Baptism:

There were no baptisms in December 2020 or January 2021.

*'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'*

## R.I.P. December:

4: Margaret Prewett at All Saints, Mark Varney at St. Barnabas; 9: Melanie Battams at St. Barnabas; 15: Peter Palmer at Bierton, Stefan Szuca at All Saints, Michael Webber at St. Barnabas; 23: David Palmer at St. Barnabas; 29: Denis Carton at St. Barnabas; 30: Roy Clark at Bierton

*'Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die'*

## Years Mind, February:

1: Christopher Blackbird Taylor, Trevor Lunnon; 3: Frank Audas; 4: Ted Summerfield; 6: Thomas Nash; 7: Annie Turney, Stan Slater, Yiu To Lau, Lilian Baines; 8: Eric Choake; 9: George Waudby; 10: George Pepper; 11: Stanley Boyce, Doreen Perry; 12: Patricia Lethbridge Farmer, Frederick Bester; 13: Mary Yirrell; 14: John Olds, Ida Kempson; 15: Nina Bolton, Leslie Brown, Winifred Turner, Gillian Marchant; 18: Bessie Scraggs; 19: Edgar Conquest, Terence Bird; 20: Frank Bates; 21: Pamela Gilbert, Ivy Wood, Margaret Marsh; 23: Dorothy Collor, Bryn Gittins, Lilian Cowley, Janet Garfield, Madge Vincent; 26: Florence Walsh, Maud Mills, Elsie Bates, Peggy King, Irene Scott; 27: Tom Skevington, Ivy Francis; 28: Stanley Kemp

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# ***Pulford VA Lower School***

***Head Teacher: Mr Dave Heather***

***Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick***

***Tel: 01525 372188***

***Website: [www.pulfordschool.org](http://www.pulfordschool.org)***

A church school for  
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We study key events in history in the school curriculum, for example, 'The Great Fire of London'; I wonder whether the COVID 19 lockdown of 2020/21 will make the new National curriculum in 2030. Landmark events, as well events in living memory, are key definers in a nation's history. Health and Education are such a fundamental part of our lives that it is easy to take them for granted. It is sobering to remember that the National Health Service only came into being on 5 July 1948. Beveridge, the architect of the NHS, identified "five giants" that had to be slain: 'want, disease, squalor, ignorance and idleness'. It was an amazing achievement born of a national desire to make it work. Today, we are more grateful to it, and the people who work in it, than ever.

When Joshua Pulford wrote his will on 10th May 1710, he left money to educate poor children of the town. 200 years later, the first recorded school inspection was in 1910: "The boys are in good order... It is very regrettable that arrangements cannot be made for the boys in the upper division to avail themselves of the Wood-work Centre. Many of them are intelligent lads who would probably derive considerable profit from a course of "Hand and Eye" training. Neither the heating nor ventilation of the rooms is satisfactory".

The school inspection another 100 years later in 2010 noted 'The school provides an outstanding education. Pupils make excellent progress and attain high standards because of outstanding teaching. They thoroughly enjoy both social and academic aspects of school, and their behaviour is excellent. A varied and exciting curriculum promotes both their achievement and their enjoyment of learning'. No mention of the woodwork centre - hopefully those early inspectors have forgotten about it!!

All Saints church dating from 1277 is the second church on the site. It has witnessed many landmark events and endured them all including the fire of 1985. The church is source of comfort and the Church of England's prayers in relation to COVID-19 sum all this up well:

Keep us, good Lord, under the shadow of your mercy,  
in this time of uncertainty and distress.

Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,

and lift up all who are brought low;

that we may rejoice in your comfort

knowing that nothing can separate us from your love,

in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Pulford continues to change and adapt over time, always striving to give of its best to the community and pupils albeit at a social distance. The PTA have been active in adapting our usual fixtures to the 'new normal' and continue to fundraise for a new minibus. Teaching and church services are adapted, spliced together remotely and redefined. The cry 'I'm zooming home to zoom' no longer seems strange but quite normal. We wait with baited breath to see what the next 'new normal' of 2021 will be....

***Tessa Rees, Deputy Head***



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# On a musical note.....



It was wonderful to welcome the BBC to All Saints on 17 January and to hear that people both locally and nationally found the service so uplifting. As it turned out, with Lockdown 3, we were unable to welcome the BBC production team in person; the whole service had to be prepared and broadcast remotely. The choir was able to use a couple of previously recorded items and, in a first for us, we recorded a responsorial form of the Benedictus. This was particularly tricky to bring together from individual contributions recorded remotely because there is no regular rhythm to this style of music. It really needs the choir to be close together in one place so that singers can feel the sense of togetherness. Nevertheless, the end result was perfectly acceptable, albeit a little stilted.

One of the delightful things which came out of the blue was a text message from Peter Nardone, the composer of one of the anthems “I give to you a new commandment”. I have his permission to quote it here:

*Dear Paul, Can I thank you for choosing my anthem for this morning's BBC Radio 4 broadcast? Like so many, I'm just at home with the coffee, the dog and the wireless so it was a lovely surprise to suddenly hear it again. For it to be sung and accompanied with both care and devotion was a bonus. Please thank those choir members who took part, and I hope it won't be long before they're all back together again. With all thanks and best wishes, Peter Nardone.*

And, on a personal level, I have been contacted by old Cambridge friends and others whom I haven't been in contact with for a long time, including the former Director of Music at St Augustine's Edgbaston, a church with a similar music tradition to All Saints, where I was a chorister for a while.

Looking forward, it doesn't look as if the choir will back in church for quite a while. As I write, I am considering whether to ask the choir to record the Allegri Miserere Mei for Ash Wednesday. In the spirit of optimism, I am still holding on to the possibility that we may be able to sing the Hallelujah Chorus live on Easter Sunday morning.

**Paul Dickens**

**BBC RADIO 4 Sunday Worship**

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**I will sing with the Spirit**

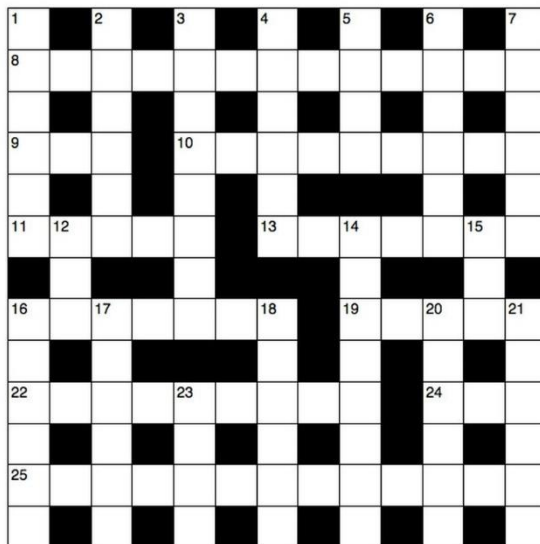
From All Saints Leighton Buzzard with Alexander, BBC Radio 2 Young Chorister of the Year 2020. Last July ten young people competed for the coveted title BBC Radio 2 and Songs of Praise Young Chorister of the Year. Today Sunday Worship visits the parish church where Alexander's family worships. A former cathedral chorister, you can hear Alexander's magical voice as soloist and with his parish choir - where he first started singing. Preacher: The Revd Cate Irvine; Director of Music: Paul Dickens; Producer: Ruth Thomson.

23 days left to listen  
38 minutes

Show less

## Across

- 8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)  
9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap'  
(Leviticus 4:12) (3)  
10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books  
of Esdras and the Maccabees are part  
of it (9)  
11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)  
13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)  
16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)  
19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in  
view of God's mercy, to — your bodies  
as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)  
22 David's plea to God concerning  
those referred to in 14 Down: 'On —  
let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)  
24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1)  
25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to  
God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)



## Down

- 1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)  
2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)  
3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)  
4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father'  
(1 Timothy 5:1) (6)  
5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)  
6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)  
7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your  
offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)  
12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)  
14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)  
15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)  
16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)  
17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was  
imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)  
18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)  
20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)  
21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)  
23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)  
*[Solution on Page 16]*

# God in the Sciences

## *Hope for 2021: Celebrating the now and future creation*

From Parish Pump: *This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.*

I find that watching buds swelling on trees and plants during the winter months gives me a tremendous sense of hope. We may all need some extra hope for 2021, after the events of 2020. By the time you read this a number of us may have been fortunate enough to receive a COVID vaccine, but all of us will probably still be under various kinds of restrictions. After creation's winter shut-down, the sight of tiny flowers poking out of brown earth may be more important than ever.

Getting outdoors during daylight hours, enjoying green spaces and getting some fresh air and exercise are great ways to keep ourselves healthy at any time of year. A psychologist colleague wrote, "Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood and increased life satisfaction." I expect it is this sense of awe that makes it easier for many of us to connect with God outdoors.



Photo by Boris Smokrovic on Unsplash

Helping ourselves and others to thrive is a good start to 2021, but it is also vital to have hope for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic was caused by an animal virus jumping into the human population. Diseases like this are not 'natural disasters', but are almost certainly caused by environmental destruction and poor farming practices - either from greed or the desperation born of poverty. Part of the answer to the current crisis is for us to care for all of Creation, both human and everything else, with God's help.

Our ultimate hope is in God's promise that He will bring about a new heavens and new earth. We can look forward to the day when Creation will be fully redeemed and liberated from evil. The Greek word used to describe the new creation is the same as that used to describe someone who becomes a Christian, whose humanity is restored and renewed. There will be continuity between the old and new earth as it is cleansed and purified, surpassing and perfecting what has gone before. There will also be some discontinuity, as there will be no more suffering or death.

So, one source of hope for 2021 is that we can enjoy both caring for and meeting God in Creation. But the parts of Creation that we find most beautiful, giving us a sense of awe and helping us to worship, are also a reminder that there is something much better to come.

*Lift your eyes ...  
Looking at some of All Saints' curiosities  
with thanks to Terry Warburton for his help with this series*



***The Story of the Good Samaritan – told in stained glass.***

All Saints has many fabulous windows, and it is well worth spending time properly looking at them. Most are high up and rather difficult to see, but this one in the Good Samaritan Room is by Burlison and Grylls and can be explored close up.





Seen from this proximity, one can admire the exquisite detail – the injured man pleading with his assailants, the fury in their eyes, the hat and bag dropped on the floor; the writing on the Pharisee’s script as he walks by, his nose in the air and waving a dismissive hand; the inn, with its water jar on the steps and a vase of flowers in the niche; and the donkey quietly standing by.

Particularly fascinating then, that after all that effort to depict these tiny details, the artist has put the wrong reference in the panel at the bottom! (It should be Luke X XXXVI and XXXVII. Did he just run out of space?)



**St James the Least of All:** *The Rev Dr Gary Bowness continues his tongue-in-cheek letters from 'Uncle Eustace'...*  
[I suspect this may resonate with readers from our village churches! Ed]



## On the nonsense of having a lavatory at church

The Rectory  
St James the Least of All

My dear Nephew Darren

This year, the rigours of Lent have taken second place to a far more pressing matter: the installation of a lavatory at St James the Least of All.

Personally, I entirely disapprove of this additional sign of decadence in our moral fibre; we have survived perfectly happily for the last 800 years without one, so why is there such an urgent need now? And being surrounded by acres of fields, there seems to be a completely acceptable alternative.

It also spoils the pleasure I used to take, informing ushers at weddings, having liberally refreshed themselves at our local pub before the Service, that we have no facilities and that they would just have to wait. Their look of pained resignation, developing to clear signs of repentance as the Service progressed, was most cheering. It also meant that wedding parties did not linger after the Service but disappeared with commendable speed to safe havens.

I anticipate that now we have the thing, a sub-committee will form to devise a commissioning Service for the person who will be in charge of its maintenance. I can already foresee Lady Bartlett proposing an appropriate set of robes for the office holder – although it will need some tact to select suitable insignia on the sleeves.

In fact, the project has not been entirely successful; we still need to have a lock fitted and so at present, occupants have been advised to sing hymns loudly. A hymn book has been installed as an *aide memoire*.

The greater difficulty arises from our antiquated plumbing system. A member of the congregation can leave a Service perfectly discreetly; they can enter the lavatory unseen by anyone, but on flushing, water is drawn through pipes running the length of the inside of the building with a thunderous roar.

I am sure that in your worship centre you will have lavish cloakrooms furnished with colour co-ordinated walls and towels, baby-changing facilities and video monitors relaying everything going on in the service. But we are made of sterner stuff, and I maintain that our congregation should be grateful that they now have a lavatory at all. And to think that someone suggested it should even have heating!

Your loving uncle,  
Eustace

# ***St. Nicholas, Hockliffe***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Churchwardens:***

***Brian Speller: 210 565;***

***Roger Spalding: 07451 877 501***



As this is the first magazine of 2021, we wish all our readers and everyone “A Happy New Year”.

At the time of writing this article, we have just taken out the Christmas decorations from the Church and our home. How ordinary and bare they looked without the colour and sparkle of candles and lights.

We are now looking forward to Epiphany, and I can't help but wonder how the shepherds and the three wise men must have felt, to be there at that special time.

I admire and wonder at their tenacity to keep going, and not to give up on such a long journey, but the joy and peace of seeing Jesus must have made them feel uplifted and humble at the same time.

Many of us may be feeling tired and worried at the prospect of having to wait longer to see our loved ones, but Jesus is our guide and our light, and with his love, we will eventually overcome this period of loneliness and helplessness. A phone call, letter or email can mean a lot to people who live alone, or are depressed, sad or ill.

Having a zoom service first thing in the morning starts the day, and reminds us that we are all loved, and if we follow in his footsteps we will look for the light instead of the darkness. For keeping our Sunday Church Services going, and our daily morning prayers, we can thank Noel and Linda for all their inspiration and excellent technology.

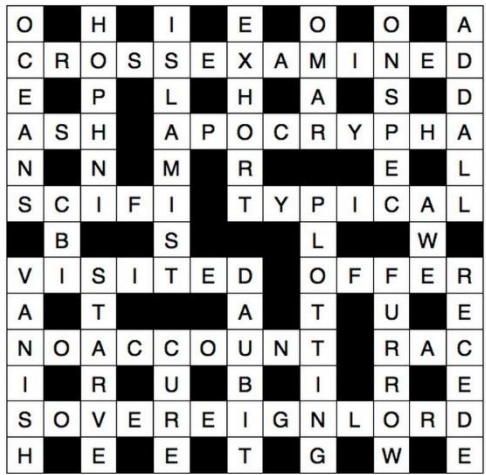
Let us pray and hope that 2021 will be better.

***Carol Speller***





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## ***St. Michael's, Eggington***

***Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney***

***Tel: 01525 237633***

***Church Officers:***

***Carol Hart 384634***

***Paul Brown 751861***



When I moved to Leighton Buzzard in the early 1970s, at weekends I would sometimes get the half hourly bus to Luton. After a few journeys I decided to make the bus through Eggington my bus of choice. The village had a wealth of beautiful front gardens, an eclectic mix of houses, an old pub, The Horseshoes, and a traditional village church, all in a rural setting. 10 years later I was living in the village, much as it had been the first time I saw it.

In those days there was a farm in the centre of the village, where the three mock Tudor houses now stand, and sheep grazed on a field opposite. The farm was owned by South Bedfordshire Council and disappeared in a rationalisation. The farmer went elsewhere and the land was divided between the remaining council farms, now all privately owned. This was the first real change I saw in the village.



The finest garden was a Victorian Potager in front of Pear Tree Cottage, long gone, when the elderly sisters who tended it died. The Village School had closed not long before we arrived and Linda Sear wanted to see it turned into a village Hall. She organised a meeting to garner support, which was a success, and a few years later Bob Monkhouse opened the Village Hall, a much-needed and well used addition.

The village pub closed and became an Indian restaurant. Its second incarnation is the Curry Garden with The Horseshoes bar. Over the years many of the houses have grown in size, some retaining and improving the original façade and some changed out of all recognition. Many of the gardens have been paved for car parking, a sign of the times; and for some mysterious reason the Parish Council have taken to mowing the verges so often that we no longer see the joyful froth of cow parsley that used to adorn them in spring.

In nearly 40 years the village has changed greatly, but the lovely church stands serene amidst its churchyard. To enter the building, with its traditional pews and beautiful stained glass, is to enter a place of calm and contemplation. It is the one place in the still rural village which remains as it was, its form and purpose unsullied by the change in life that goes on around it.



***Susan Bradley***

## **St. Michael & All Angels, Billington**

**Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh**

**Tel: 01525 838450**

**Churchwardens:**

**Sandra Brewin 373644;**

**Julia Haviland 850380**



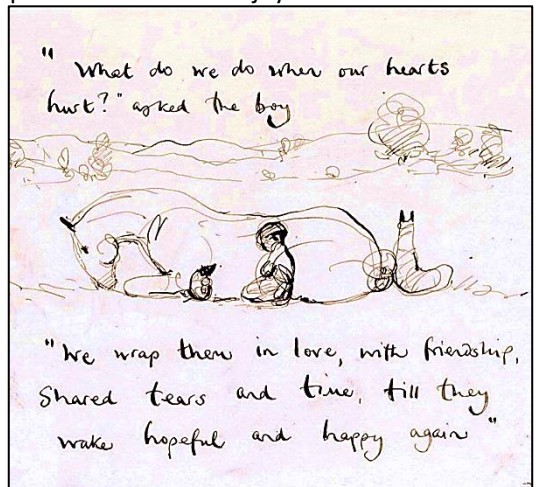
Believe it or not, Good News has come to us in Billington from the USA. On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020, Jasper David Thompson was born to Rachel and Jonathan Thompson, a grandson for Tina and David. Jasper weighed 8lbs 1oz at birth and from all accounts is growing very rapidly. He has come to join his sister Matilda who is two. We thank God for his safe arrival.

Here in Billington we have largely been protected from the virus. So far there have been seven or eight known cases, none of which have needed hospitalisation. People in the village have been very careful in following the restrictions, taking daily solo walks or staying in their "bubble".

Some have already received their first vaccination; others are eagerly awaiting an invitation. This pandemic seems to be like a world-wide wound. All injuries need time to heal and even when they have healed, scar tissue is evident which may remain obvious for several years to come. The issue at that stage will be not to keep picking at the scar and reminding ourselves how awful it all was, but to rejoice in the healing power and thank God for life, its opportunities and its potential for fun and joy.

Thanks to Revd Steve and many helpers, we at St Michael and All Angels have joined with members of the Church of the Good Shepherd for Zoom services each Sunday at 9.45am. We enjoy the virtual time together and are happy that we are gradually getting to know the congregation at CGS.

**Sandra Brewin**



***Good Shepherd, Sandhills***

***Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh***

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwarden: Steve Nixon***



**CHURCH of the  
GOOD SHEPHERD**

### **Hope and endurance in home schooling**

Week one of home learning did not go smoothly in our house. The moment that summed up the mayhem was when my youngest was taking part in an online class. The kitchen table was heaped with stationery, worksheets, laptop cables and the remnants of a hurried snack. The dog was whining. My other son was verbally pelting me with 'Mummy!'. Exasperated, I tell him to wait a moment while I try and get the teacher back on screen after my little Narcissus once again managed to maximise the camera view of himself. A work email pings, reminding me I should have started work two hours ago. I begin singing the alphabet to prompt my son to answer the teacher's question about letter order. The staccato 'Mummy!' starts up again, I add a 'shhhhhh' in between 'g' and 'h'. As I finish 'x,y,z' I suddenly hear the teacher say, 'that's lovely singing, did you know you're not on mute'. Noooooooooo! My home in all its unfiltered reality has been broadcast to nearly 30 kids and their parents.

Now we are past the initial chaos, a new work and school routine has been established and I've learnt to keep my eye on the mute button. Seeing the teachers in action daily is inspiring. They don't bat an eyelid at the interruptions and technical glitches and like gliding swans don't show the hard work going on behind the scenes.

This got me thinking about what makes a good teacher. Jesus was a dynamic and effective teacher. He could get his message over in easy to digest parables that could resonate with people from all walks of life. He could be a mentor, empathetic, authoritative - commanding the attention of a whole hillside of people with his words. He knew when to challenge, how to lead by example and he showed patience and forgiveness as his disciples made their mistakes along the way.

Although Jesus had all the skills, conviction and miracles to spread the message, teaching was not without its challenges. He came up against the scribes, Pharisees, kings, the Roman government and in the end one of his own disciples. Despite all the challenges and no doubt because of his ultimate suffering, Jesus' lessons live on two millennia later.

Theodore Roosevelt said: "Nothing in the world is worth having or worth doing unless it means effort, pain, difficulty..."

St. Paul said: 'We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope' (Romans 5 3-5).

Many of us are feeling fatigued at the approach of the anniversary of this pandemic, tired of facing our own personal challenges and suffering. My advice is celebrate the little wins where you can and reflect on your endurance so far. With the renewal of Spring and Easter on its way, let the Hope carry us through.

***Jo Bellamy***

## **Saints on Earth**

*Personal accounts of the wide-range of spiritually significant men and women who have inspired and influenced us. Julia Dickens looks at the life of*

### **Gonville Ffrench-Beytagh [1912-1991]**



**According to John Betjeman:**

#### ***“Something of a saint, the martyred Dean of Johannesburg”***

Born in Shanghai to utterly dysfunctional parents, Gonville Ffrench-Beytagh was shipped to the UK at the age of 7 for a chequered educational career, followed by several years roaming the world, kicking his heels, sleeping rough, drinking, brawling, and shearing sheep in Australia. (He would often claim that he was one of the few clergy who could preach on the Good Shepherd as he had been a notably bad shepherd himself.) All this led him to a place where he was sure there was more to life. He just wasn't sure what.

Until one Christmas Eve ... I first heard him tell his story when I was 16. A tubby little man, unprepossessing, round glasses, fidgety hands and red socks, recently arrived in the UK, not long out of jail, he came to talk to a 6<sup>th</sup> Form group. I was hooked.

Such courage and bravery, combined with such humility – he told it as a good story, with a lesson to us all to be “reckless daring Christians”, to stand up for what we think right, no matter what the consequences. The effect was captivating:

That Christmas Eve, he went to Johannesburg Cathedral, where the dean had locked the doors to keep drunken revellers from the Midnight Mass: *“It was a hot night and as the doors had been closed, the air was completely still. I knelt at the communion rail, and as I knelt there I felt a very strong cool breeze – and that was all. I do not think that at the time I had any idea what the word ‘breath’ or the word ‘wind’ means to the Christian, or even that the Greek word for the Holy Spirit means breath. I did not even think of Jesus breathing the spirit on his disciples. All I know is that this breath, or wind, which I felt, had a meaning and a content for me which I have never been able to communicate to anyone else, and still cannot describe.”* [from *Encountering Darkness*, Collins 1973]

He sent a postcard to Bishop Clayton, asking how to become a priest. The bishop asked why he wanted to be a priest, to which he replied that it was the very last thing he wanted. The bishop was convinced. Gonville was ordained 18 months later.

His reputation as an outspoken preacher and a vociferous opponent of racism and apartheid gathered pace. Finally, in 1965, as Dean of Johannesburg, and with many white friends being imprisoned or exiled for speaking out for freedom, he spoke openly against apartheid, condemning it as “blasphemous against God and man”. He threw open his cathedral doors – those same doors that had been kept closed at Christmas over 30 years earlier – to black protesters chased up the cathedral steps by police beating them with rhino whips, police dogs snapping at their heels.

At the same time, a special fund sanctioned by Lambeth and the UK government wanted to send money to support black political prisoners and their families, including those held on the notorious Robben Island. It was illegal in South Africa to receive money from this fund, so Gonville's long-time friend, my aunt Alison, was asked to "launder" (her word) the money. Whatever happened, they were never to disclose the source. They thought little about the risks they were taking!

Gonville was being watched closely by the South African special branch (BOSS), and when, at Christmas 1970, he publicly called the "South African way of life" the "South African way of death", he was arrested, held in solitary confinement and brutally interrogated. Alison was named as a co-conspirator.

In prison, Gonville was shocked to realise fully the way in which white members of the security forces regarded black people as less than human. In solitary confinement, he was refused bread and wine, but he decided to celebrate a daily spiritual Eucharist in his cell. Each morning, he stood in front of a piece of wall between two barred and grilled high windows, and imagined himself before the cross. *"I faced it as I would an altar, said what I could remember of the Mass and made a spiritual communion. I can say with complete certainty that the communion that I received then was as real as any communion that I have ever received sacramentally."*

Released on bail, but kept under house arrest pending his trial, he narrowly avoided being blown up by a bomb under his car. When the state pressed more sinister charges under the Terrorism Act carrying the death penalty, Alison was still named as co-conspirator, and prepared to be extradited from the UK. In his defence, Gonville said that, far from advocating violence, he had warned that apartheid would result in violence if it were not changed. Apartheid, he insisted, was "heresy – and damnable heresy"; and "blasphemous against God and man."

Found guilty, he was sentenced to five years in prison. Women in the courtroom gasped and sobbed and began singing *Onward, Christian Soldiers*. His conviction, which hinged "on what he had said rather than what he had done," sent a warning to his outspoken Anglican clerical colleagues. Finally on appeal, in April 1972, his sentence was set aside and he was released. He left South Africa for London that same night and spent the last two decades of his life in exile in England.

In due course, he took a post at St Vedast-alias-Foster in the shadows of St Paul's Cathedral with a resident population of 11, and a thriving congregation of hundreds, including me and Paul. He married us and christened our daughter Kate.

When he died, I wrote to Alison, describing my feeling that just being in the room with Gonville was to have access to some kind of heavenly hotline; surely the same feeling that the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' cloak must have had. Despite his human frailties, perhaps even because of them, Gonville was truly a Man of God. It was enough to be close.

Alison said she had had 250 identical letters! There is now a prayer station dedicated to his memory in the crypt at Canterbury Cathedral.

*Julia Dickens*

Eco-Shopping in Leighton Buzzard – remembering your bag-for-life is only the start of it...

There are a growing number of options when it comes to reducing single-use packaging when you shop in Leighton Buzzard.

On the market, we have Heni Cloake and her Good Life Refill stall, selling organic, ethically sourced dry goods, without single use plastic. She sells pasta, rice, beans, grains and lots more (and she delivers locally too).



Take your own container and she'll fill it up. The fruit and veg stalls will do the same and The Honey Man will give you a discount if you return empty jars\*. Strattons and Yirrells butchers will happily put your bacon etc into your tupperware box / take away carton and many local coffee shops will fill up your re-usable cup.

There are also options for non-edible re-fills, including Nature's Harvest on North St. and Mimic Gifts on Hockliffe Street. Both sell eco-friendly cleaning and toiletry products and do refills on some of these. (Both do delivery and click and collect).

**REMEMBER:** it is more important to **REDUCE** and **RE-USE** than to recycle...

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