

# 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*

*December 2022 / January 2023*

*70p*



## **Inside:**

Round the Team: the final article in this series features Church of the Good Shepherd, reaching people where they are

Steve Marsh: Advent, a season for new beginnings

Mother Kirsty encounters God in the Incarnation

Ed Price enjoys school dinner

Sam Kemp: an organ scholar's journey

Plus news of great joy from the Festive Fayre, Eco Church, and village churches.

# All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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## ***New Beginnings***

*By Rev'd Steve Marsh*



In the Church calendar, Advent is our season for preparing for Christmas. However, in our culture the start of preparing for Christmas for many is the release of the Christmas adverts. The Christmas advert that tends to be most keenly anticipated is John Lewis's, which this year is quite poignant.



For those who haven't seen it (spoiler alert!) the advert is entitled 'The beginner' and it features a middle-aged man learning to skateboard. The first two thirds of the advert show the rather amusing attempts of the man to master this new skill, accumulating various minor injuries along the way. Up to this point there is no explanation of why the man is learning to skateboard.

In the final third of the advert, the man and his partner answer the door to a social worker and a very nervous looking girl, called Ellie, with a rucksack, firmly clutching a skateboard. The couple are Ellie's new foster parents. In preparation for Ellie's arrival, the man, knowing that she is into skateboarding, has learnt to skateboard so that they immediately have something in common to help her feel comfortable in her new home.

The advert ends by highlighting that over 108,000 children are currently in the care system in the UK. Rather than John Lewis advertising products and services, this Christmas it is choosing to communicate its long-term commitment to support the futures of young people from care through partnering with 'Action for Children' and 'Who cares? Scotland'.

The efforts of the man to learn skateboarding, to have something in common with Ellie, is a good challenge to us to learn the language of the culture around us. In doing this we can form contact points to help people connect with the gift of Jesus, Immanuel, God with us, that is at the centre of Christmas. John Lewis highlighting a social need in their advert is also a challenge to us to find out what the needs are of the people around us, especially in this difficult time of the cost-of-living crisis. This enables us to demonstrate the 'love for our neighbour' that is a central ethic of the Christian faith.

Whilst we travel through the season of Advent to prepare for Christmas, is there a new skill you could learn to connect with a new group of people in our local community? Something musical, or a new craft perhaps? Is there a social need in our area you could give some time or resources to, to bring hope to those in difficult situations? In taking the risk of 'The beginning' you could enable the new people you meet to try a new beginning with Jesus this Christmas.

***Fr. Steve Marsh***

## *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> Sundays: All Age Service

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

6pm Evening Prayer

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

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

#### **Weekdays:**

#### **Holy Communion**

7.30pm Tuesday

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

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

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

9.00am Tuesday – Friday

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

#### **Sundays:**

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

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

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

#### **Sundays:**

8am: Holy Communion

11am Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1<sup>st</sup> Sundays: Family Service

**Tuesdays:** 7pm Holy Communion

#### **Morning Prayer via Zoom:**

9.00am Monday - Saturday

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

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

9.30am 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

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

9.30am 2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays: Family Communion

4<sup>th</sup> Sundays: Holy Communion

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

11.15am Holy Communion

### **Good Shepherd, Astral Park Sports & Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Sandhills, LU7 4AY:**

**Sundays at 9.45am:**

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: 'In the Community', at Astral Park

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Family Service

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Bring and share breakfast and Holy Communion

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

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

**All Saints Toddler Time:** All Saints every Wednesday during term time, at 9.30am & at 1.30pm. £1.50 per parent / carer & child; 50p extra per child; refreshments included.

**Leighton Young Singers Club:** for children in Years 2-6, meets on Fridays at 6.30 - 7.30pm.

**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, 6.45 trebles; 7.30 adults.

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

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

*Contact Details on Page 2.*

## ***News Roundup***

The Editors would like to thank all the contributors for their articles and continued support over the past year, and we hope you have enjoyed reading your Saints Alive Magazine. There will be no January issue, but we will be back in February with some more interesting stories and articles to share with you. In the meantime we would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy 2023!



## ***Seasonal smiles***

*Children's version of the Christmas story*

When the three wise guys from the east side arrived, they found Jesus in the manger.

When Mary heard that she was the mother of Jesus, she sang the Magna Carta.

Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.



What do you call Santa's helpers? – Subordinate Clauses.

What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire? – Frostbite.



December is the month when the children begin to discuss what to get Dad for Christmas. Some insist on getting him a shirt, others a pair of socks. But the argument always ends in a tie.



A Sunday school teacher asked her class, "What was Jesus' mother's name?"

One child answered, "Mary."

The teacher then asked, "Who knows what Jesus' father's name was?"

Another child ventured: "Verge?"

Confused, the teacher asked, "Where did you get that?"

He replied hesitantly: "Well, you know they are always talking about Verge n' Mary."



A mother took her young daughter to visit Father Christmas in his grotto at the garden centre. He greeted the youngster merrily and asked: "And what would you like for Christmas?"

The little girl stared at him, open-mouthed with horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

# ***Parish Registers***

**Weddings:** There were no weddings in October or November.

**Holy Baptism, October:**

23: Emily Lila Grace Winchester

**Holy Baptism, November:**

6: Oscar Paul Jarman

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

**R.I.P. October:**

4: Vincenzo Difabio at All Saints; 5: Agnes Cowan at Bierton; 19: Norman Littleton at Crownhill; 20: John Dry at Bierton; 21: Thomas McKinley at All Saints; 21: Brian Cox at St. Leonard's

**R.I.P. November:**

29: Janet Wood at St. Michael's

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

**Years Mind, December:**

1: Tony Pyman, Nora Davis; 2: Frederick Deeley, Leslie Morgan; 3: Bram Evans, Keith Hazells; 5: Peter Harmer; 6: Leslie Plenderleath, Charles Scraggs; 7: Jonathan Finch; 8: Doreen Lewis, George Lee; 9: Arnold Woolhead, Derek Williamson; 10: Kathleen Meredith; 11: Cynthia Slater; 12: Edie Skevingon, Albert Perry, Edna Carpenter; 14: Dorothy Scammell, David Groom; 16: Ernest Lennard, Win Deans; 17: Terry Spencer, Karen Summerfield; 18: Simon Munford, John Jones; 19: Gemma Howard; 20: Cynthia Jury; 21: Keith Biggerstaff; 22: David Noble, Eric Crompton, John MacLennan; 23: Charles Cope; 25: Joan Winter, Margaret Ellison, Alice Shelley; 26: Roy Palmer; 27: Melanie Andrews, Sandra Hipwell, Maurice Raymond, Cecil Joynes; 28: Albert Nash, Colin Proctor, Gwenda Burley; 29: David Brooker; 30: Mary Warburton, Evelyn Pomeroy, Reg Lunnon, Mary Jaggard, Roy Eggleton; 31: Edward Meredith, Nancy Meredith, Peggy Stonier

**Years Mind, January:**

1: Sarah Andrew; 2: Arthur Keyworth, Kay Kiteley; 6: Eileen Garlick, Peter Walker, Elizabeth Underwood, David Burley; 7: John Fogg, Joyce Lathwell, John Carter, Peter Birchall; 9: Ellen Daniels, Stanley Rees Jones, Stanley Blake; 10: Eileen Pott, Arthur Speller, Margaret (Peg) Tingey; 11: Ivy Nash; 12: Rita Shephard, Elsie Molloy, Ronald Chandler; 13: Rosalie Preston; 15: Annie Norman, Mary Dell, Dennis Holroyd, Glenys Johnston; 18: Danny Munroe, Ellie Ogden-Hooper; 19: Dian Milne, Monica Bacon; 20: Maurice Greensted, Dolly Harmer; 22: Margaret Beck, Cyril Dimmock; 23: Robert Kiteley, Percy Flewin, Betty Tuck, Annie Williams, Revd. Vernon Smith, Peter Kiddle; 26: Charlotte Sawka, Phyllis Short; 27: Betty Baines, William Leath, Alice Pyman; 28: Russell Palmer; 29: Bill Stonier; 31: John Harris, Maureen Webb



## ***Taking the Chair***

When the former Chair of Governors, Paul Whittington, asked me for a coffee back in March I had an inkling that he had an ulterior motive! So it proved to be when he asked me if I might consider standing as his replacement when he stepped down from the role at the end of the academic year. Naturally I pretended to be ambivalent about it and uttered the oft heard line “I’ll give it careful consideration”. The truth was that I didn’t really need to think that hard about it - I believe we are extremely blessed to have Pulfords as our church school and the chance and privilege to help shape what it does for our young people by taking on this role was too good not to accept.

I have now been in the chair for two months and I certainly feel like I have gone back to school! There’s lots to learn, both about the nitty-gritty of the role but also, and more inspiringly, about what actually goes on at the school. My respect and admiration for teachers and all school staff grows day and by day.



As has become customary, the governors were invited to spend lunch and an afternoon in the school before our first board meeting of the academic year in October. This is a fabulous chance to meet the children and see them in action in the classroom. Sitting with various year groups at lunch I ran the full gamut of conversations from what they had been doing in Maths that morning, through what was that strange green vegetable on their plate (it was a rather delicious broad bean) to what football team I supported (a few of them had actually heard of the mighty Hatters!).

What we all found was that the children were engaging, curious, kind and lots of fun to be around – in short, a credit to the school.

Challenges lie ahead: the continued recovery from the impacts of the pandemic remains at the forefront of planning and there is the looming prospect of inspections from OFSTED and SIAMS to occupy minds. However, I am confident that as the school lives out its vision of ‘Growing God’s family, through faith, hope and love, dedicated to realising the potential of each person’, these challenges will be more than ably met.

I am looking forward to continuing my journey and, with God’s help, doing all I can to support Mr Heather and his team in the wonderful work they do for our children.

***Ed Price, Chair of Governors***



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Buzzard, LU7 3HT  
**01525 377384, or 07774 901293**  
email: [eileennaples50@outlook.com](mailto:eileennaples50@outlook.com)

## St Leonard’s Church Hall Heath and Reach

Refurbished Hall available for hire.  
Regular or occasional bookings



Capacity approx 130  
Easy access. Car parking  
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[stleonardheath@gmail.com](mailto:stleonardheath@gmail.com)



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Buzzard, Beds, LU7 1EA  
01525 372 204

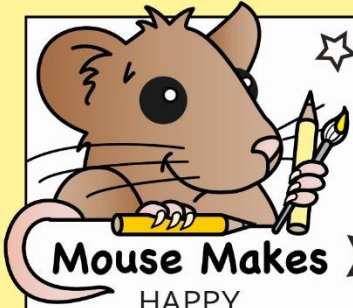
## Selections

*Pet, Gift and Garden.  
Kitchen & workshop  
DIY & repairs  
Games & models*



*[selections\\_pet\\_garden](http://selections_pet_garden)  
[www.selections-web.co.uk/petandgarden](http://www.selections-web.co.uk/petandgarden)*





# Mouse Makes

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

Read the Christmas story in Luke 2:1-21.

Answer the questions, colour the picture and colour one star each day until Christmas.

Where was Mary's baby born? Why were Joseph and Mary there?

Where did Mary lay her baby and why? What did Mary dress her baby in?

Why were the shepherds afraid?

What good news did the angel tell?

What did the shepherds do after they had seen the baby?

Who appeared praising God, what did they say?



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ALL • DECREE • JOSEPH • DAVID • BETHLEHEM • MARY • BIRTH • SON • LAID • MANGER  
INN • SHEPHERDS • FLOCK • NIGHT • LORD • GLORY • GOOD NEWS • JOY • DAY  
SAVIOUR • CHRIST • SIGN • BABY • GOD • PEACE • ANGELS • GO • SEE • TOLD • PRAISE

## On a musical note.....



### **Sam Kemp, Organ Scholar**



My name is Samuel Kemp, and since September 2021 I have been the sixth-form Organ Scholar of here at All Saints. I attend the Purcell School for Young Musicians in Bushey, Hertfordshire, and study organ and composition there, having played the organ since 2015.

At the age of 17, I am lucky enough to work with a very professionally run choir and with a superlative Director of Music. Life as an active member of the music department here is remarkably rewarding.

My first ever Sunday service at All Saints back in 2021 was the first service back in the church with the choir after the Covid pandemic. It was somewhat of a baptism of fire for me, when I was required to play Hubert Parry's '*I was glad*', which has a rather technical organ part, to say the least! Over the course of only a few months, I felt like I had been at All Saints for years, thanks to the exceedingly friendly and welcoming nature of everyone in the congregation, choir and clergy.

My first year as Organ Scholar was largely spent playing regularly for Sunday morning services and the occasional evensongs. Gradually, I started to rehearse the choir in the practices and eventually direct them in services. The start of my second year in September 2022 saw me conduct a morning service in full for the first time. To date, I have played much of the standard 'cathedral-type' choral repertoire including various settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis by Charles Villiers Stanford and Herbert Sumsion, as well as Gerald Finzi's '*God is gone up*' and Ralph Vaughan-Williams's '*Antiphon*', all on an absolutely amazing organ as well!



It is my aim to pursue a career in the church as a liturgical musician, organist, and eventually Director of Music. I intend to go on to be an Organ Scholar and to read Music at the University of Cambridge after a gap-year as Organ Scholar for 2023-24 at the Chapel Royal, Hampton Court. It is an exciting prospect indeed to work with the time-honoured boys' choir of the chapel and follow the mighty musical history of Hampton Court, which include names such as Thomas Tallis, William Byrd and Thomas Morley. For going down this path, my time at All Saints has been an invaluable preparation not only in terms of repertoire, but also management and administration. In all, it is a real pleasure to be part of the church community and music department at All Saints and it has certainly been a vital step in my journey on through the liturgical music career.

**Sam Kemp, Organ Scholar**



*Hold a 3 minute silence  
at 1.03 on  
GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION  
26<sup>th</sup> November 2022*

Did you know that 1 in 3 women will suffer from gender based violence in their lifetime? Or that 1 in 7 children will have lived with domestic violence at some point in their childhood.

Each year Mothers' Union joins with 6000 other organisations in 187 countries in the UN 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Based Violence and Abuse.

Beginning on 25<sup>th</sup> November, which is the International Day for the elimination of violence against women, until International Human Rights Day on 10<sup>th</sup> December, the campaign highlights all forms of gender based violence and abuse, calling for its elimination.

MU in St Albans diocese support 4 refugees by providing Christmas and Easter gifts for children and start-up packs of domestic items (kettle, pans, utensils, bedding and towels etc.) when women are able to move into their own home. This year they are collaborating with Herts Domestic Abuse Helpline and nationally MU are partnering Women's Aid in their campaign "*Come Together to End Domestic Abuse*".

On the Global Day of Action, 26th November, we are called to hold a 3 minute silence at 1.03pm to highlight the fact that 1 in 3 women worldwide continue to experience gender-based violence.

For more information and resources please see [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org) and [www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

*Alison Dobbie*



## LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

### LIVE PROFESSIONAL CONCERTS

Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre, Lake St, LB. LU7 1RX

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 7.30pm**  
**Jazz Quintet**

**Led by: Nick Smart** *trumpet*, **Nikki Iles** *piano*

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and original material.*

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Please see links on the website, [www.lbmusic.co.uk](http://www.lbmusic.co.uk)  
Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681



# Calendar of Events

## Events in the normal monthly pattern:

**4<sup>th</sup> December & 1<sup>st</sup> January**

**Bereavement Support Café** Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm



**7<sup>th</sup> December & 4<sup>th</sup> January**

**Lunch Club** in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.

Tickets £5.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



**16<sup>th</sup> December & 20<sup>th</sup> January**

**Crafty Natter** All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



## Concerts and Special Events for Advent & Christmas:

**Advent talks on Tuesday evenings at 8.15pm.**

Each talk will be about 30 minutes long, with some time for discussion.

**29<sup>th</sup> November:** God's Advertisements - Canon Malcolm Grant

**6<sup>th</sup> December:** God's Pioneers - Tom Button, Pioneer Missioner

**13<sup>th</sup> December:** God's Stewards - Canon John Payne-Cook

**20<sup>th</sup> December:** God's Creatives - Mother Cate

**3<sup>rd</sup> December:**

**Linsdale Singers Christmas Concert** All Saints 7.30pm

in aid of All Saints

**St Nick's Supper 7.30pm** Hockliffe Grange in aid of

St. Nicholas Hockliffe. Details & tickets from Paul Dickens.

**10<sup>th</sup> December: Mayor's Carol Concert** All Saints 7pm

**12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> December at various times.**

**School Carol Services and Concerts at All Saints.**

Access to the church will be restricted during these services.

**19<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> December**

**'Warm Welcome' Open Church** All Saints 10am – 3pm,

part of the Church of England's Warm Welcome initiative.



# *Services for Advent, Christmas & Epiphany*

**Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> December 11.30am Toy Service - Messy Mass for Advent.**

Donations of new unwrapped toys go to support KidsOut charity.

**6pm Carols in the Black Lion** (no evensong.)

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December 4pm Christingle**

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December 3pm "In the bleak Midwinter"**

A simple service for those who find Christmas difficult.

**Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December 6pm Lessons and Carols for Christmas**

followed by wine and mince pies (streamed).

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Eve)**

**2.30pm Nativity Service** A short simple nativity service with carols; dressing up as a character from the story optional.

**5.00pm Carols by Candlelight**

**11.15pm Midnight Mass of the Nativity** (streamed)

**Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Day)**

**8am Holy Communion**

**10am Christmas Day family communion** (streamed)

**Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> January New Year's Day 11am Holy Communion**

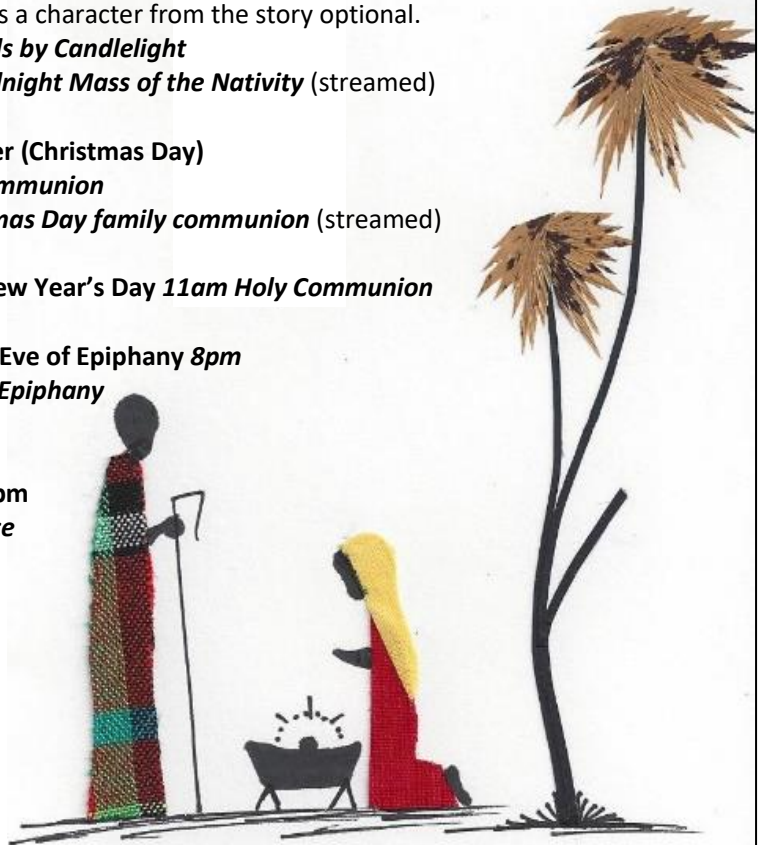
**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> January Eve of Epiphany 8pm**

**Holy Communion for Epiphany**

said with hymns

**Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> January 6pm**

**Epiphany Carol Service**



# *Around the Ouzel Valley Team*

*Eight churches, each special in their own way, but all being Christian witness to the whole community of Leighton Linlade & the villages of the Ouzel Valley*

Looking back over the last year, it's been very vibrant and full, with or without lockdown. CGS is a church that adapts to changing circumstances to do something new. Restrictions on meeting indoors took us outside, and led to our weekly community café being set up. We love a good celebration!  
Here's a small selection of photos that gives a flavour of Good Shepherd life.



*December 2021: "No beer but plenty of carols":  
an outdoor event with mulled wine, mince pies, music and glowsticks!*



*Remembrance Sunday with the footballing community, November 2021 and 2022*



*A love-themed Valentine's day event, February 2022*



*And Easter garden in a wheelbarrow, April 2022*

# *This month, Church of the Good Shepherd meeting people where the people are:*



*The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022,  
and time of remembrance in  
September 2022*



*Baptisms with the Bishop, October 2022*



*Harvest service October 2022:  
"Take your everyday, ordinary life...  
and place it before God as an offering"  
(Romans 12:1)*

*The CGS café is there come rain or shine....*



# *The Festive Fayre is a record-breaking success*

A little bit of the Christmas spirit arrived at All Saints last Saturday at the Festive Fayre. Hundreds packed into the Church to peruse a variety of stalls selling a cornucopia of delights. There were numerous handmade crafts, gifts, and artwork on offer. There were games to play and a mouth-watering array of cakes and sweet treats to tempt us. The sloe gin, mulled wine and mulled apple juice filled the Church with an appetising aroma.

Many people took the opportunity to climb the 52 stairs to get a glimpse of what goes on in the Belfry. Not only can you see the bells themselves and how they are rung, but there is the chance to have a bell ringers' view of the inside of the church and a spectacular view of the town too.

Of course, with all that going on stomachs will begin to rumble and the Coffee Shop team were ready to satisfy that need with their selection of sandwiches, rolls, soup, and of course homemade cakes.

It was wonderful to be able to come together as a community again after the last couple of years and people were certainly very generous despite current difficulties, raising record-breaking sums of over £3800 in the Fayre, and £1002 in the Coffee Shop.

Enormous thanks go to all those who helped organise this wonderful event, setting up, taking down, manning stalls ... we really couldn't have done it without you. Also, a big thank you to those who came and supported the Fayre.

***Karen Nash***





# *Eco Church announces more triumphant success*



## **Silver Eco Award –**

The Eco Church Team is thrilled to announce that All Saints has achieved the Eco Church Silver Award, one of just four in St Albans Diocese.

This award is an achievement for the whole church family at All Saints, because Eco Church looks at so much of parish life: worship and teaching; management of buildings; management of land; community and global engagement; personal lifestyles. It means that things such as: This covers everything from lightbulbs and heating to churchyard management; from preaching and teaching to provision of bird boxes and cycle racks; prayers for those affected by climate disasters; Forest Church, the work of our Fabric Committee in managing energy efficiency; our Churchyard Gardeners' care for biodiversity and wildlife; recycling blister packs; interaction with the community and guest speakers; putting into action our care for the beautiful work of our Creator God. The Church of England's Fifth Mark of Mission is: "To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth."

That's why we are now working towards the Gold Award - we have some work to do! **Well done all.**



## **Next step – Going For Gold**

To achieve these awards, the team must complete the A Rocha Eco Church questionnaire about how the church and the church community is behaving. As we all change our behaviour, we score points, and as we improve, gradually gain enough points for the next award.

You can see the questionnaire here: <https://ecoaruk.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Eco-Church-Survey-printable-copy-September-2022.pdf>

**Have a look to see how each of us  
can make a difference.**

## ***Good Shepherd, Sandhills***

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

***Tel: 01525 838450***

***Churchwardens:***

***Stuart Blofeld & Katharine Reedy***



**CHURCH of the  
GOOD SHEPHERD**

### ***Going with(out) the flow***

It's been a season of "firsts" here at Church of the Good Shepherd (CGS) recently; we held our first adult baptism service last month, had our first all in-person house group meeting for some time (no-one on zoom!) and we saw, not one, but two members of our congregation licensed as lay readers at St Alban's Abbey!

Whilst these were very pleasing, we recently experienced a rather unwelcome "first," when we were unable to run our weekly Sunday morning café at Astral Park community centre for the first time since launching it last year. The reason being there was no running water in the building, and efforts to contact the council for advice as to how we might address the problem, proved fruitless! After the usual early Sunday morning flurry of activity to erect a gazebo, flags and tables in anticipation of the café being busy, there was a sudden unusual lull after the taps unexpectedly ran dry. A change of plan was foisted upon us!

Adapting to change can be a frequent challenge in our lives, sometimes welcome, but often unsettling... whether a new monarch or another new prime minister! Climate change is bringing enormous challenges across the world. Our town is changing as new housing sprawls across previously green fields, impacting local services. Changes might need a response, possibly an adaptation from us. (We now have to get used to singing "God save the King!") Maybe we have altered our behaviour in response to climate change.

So what did happen when the water ran dry at the community centre?

After initially ringing our contact numbers, the gradual realisation dawned that other things wouldn't function without water, most importantly the toilets! But the decision was made to continue with the church service, which runs alongside the café, and to serve a simplified café menu consisting of bottled drinks, along with the usual cakes and pastries. What eventually transpired was in fact something rather wonderful.

As the service proceeded, the conversations at the café took an unusual turn. "What is that lovely music?" our café helpers were asked. It turned out that whilst there was a full congregation in the service producing an increased volume, simultaneously the adjacent football matches were unusually quiet at the behest of the FA, who had asked for parental "encouragement" to be curtailed for a week, as apparently it can get out of hand! Our service was therefore heard loud and clear on the football pitches and folk were pleased to be invited to our Christmas Beer and Carols event (on 9th December) to hear more!

*"When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change."*  
(Mahatma Gandhi)

***Clare Nichols***

## **St. Nicholas, Hockliffe**

**Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney**

**Tel: 01525 237633**

**Churchwardens:**

**Brian Speller: 210565; Roger Spalding: 07451 877501**



### **Happy New Year!**

Advent is the start of the Christian Year. Advent, from the Latin word *adventus*, means arrival, and the arrival we are waiting for is that of Jesus. Advent would sometimes be referred to as St Philip's Fast or Winter Lent. Even today some Christians will fast on Monday, Wednesday and Friday for each of the four weeks of Advent

For about a thousand Years Advent lasted for five weeks but this was then reduced to four weeks by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085).

What is Advent for? For children it may be the gentle pathway of the successive doors of the Advent Calendar. Each door with a surprise in the form of sweets or chocolate. So much for fasting!

For the decadent, each little door on the calendar might hide gin or brandy or exotic cheeses, and for the rich the doors might hide diamonds or gold coins!!!

For Christians it is a time for reflection on the past year; for preparation to celebrate the birth of Jesus and to look forward to the day when Christ will come again.

Each of the four Advent Sundays has its own theme and each theme is signalled by the lighting of a candle, displayed in a wreath. In church terms the Advent wreath is a comparatively modern idea, being invented by Johan Wichern in 1839, in Germany.

Each candle is lit in turn with the previous candles being reused.

The Candle of Hope for God's People, shining in the darkness.

The Candle of Peace: The Prophets of the Old Testament.

The Candle of Love: John the Baptist.

The Candle of Joy: Mary the mother of Jesus.



No consideration of Advent would be complete without a mention of our star player, St. Nicholas. St Nicholas' Day is December 6<sup>th</sup>. It is celebrated as a Christian festival because of the saint's reputation as a bringer of gifts. The festival is celebrated at Hockliffe by a patronal supper, held on the nearest Saturday to the festival date.

This is an evening of fellowship, good food and live music, hosted at Hockliffe Grange by Julia and Paul Dickens, as they have so generously hosted the event in their home for many years. (Tickets £15 in aid of St. Nicholas, and available from members of the PCC or Paul & Julia.)

The other event celebrated in Advent at St Nicholas Church is our traditional Carols by Candlelight, which this year is on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm. For many years the church has been packed for this service and we hope that this year will be no exception.

**Roger Spalding**

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

**Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh**

**Tel: 01525 838450**

**Churchwardens:**

**Sandra Brewin 373644;**

**Julia Haviland 850380**



Mahatma Gandhi is reputed to have coined the phrase: "Live simply that others may simply live ". For years many have been wondering how long the "first world" can go on living in comfort, security and plenty while the so called "third world" suffers poverty, instability and starvation. It seems that at last crunch time has come and unless we learn to share the planet's declining resources we are all destined, like Edward Lear's Jumblies, to set to sea in a sieve.

St Michael and All Angels, like many other churches, marked Remembrance Day on 13th November. Rev. Steve Marsh, thankfully recovered from a nasty bout of Covid, was able to take the service. He spoke to us about the need for Christians to proclaim Hope to people in spite of the distressing news that we hear and the dire portents which Jesus speaks of in the Gospel



To help us to remember those who sacrificed their lives we had displayed a Tommy and also a photograph of Audrey Ingledow's friend Bill Batts MBE (recently died in his late nineties), a wonderful veteran of WW2, who was responsible for erecting the Commonwealth Normandy Memorial.

We are working slowly towards revamping the Garden of Rest in the churchyard.

When the work is finished there will be a low wall outside the existing hedge in which plaques can be fixed. The plaques will show the names and dates of those whose ashes rest there.

***Sandra Brewin***



### **Christmas Services:**

Sunday 19th December, 6pm: Carol Service

Saturday 24th December, 5pm: Crib Service

Saturday 24th December, 11.15pm: 1st Communion of Christmas

No service at St. Michael and All Angels on Christmas Day.

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

**Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney**

**Tel: 01525 237633**

**Church Officers:**

**Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861**



### ***What's been happening in Eggington?***

We've had our first visit from the Community Payback Team. These are young offenders who have committed minor offences and have been ordered to do so many hours of service in the community. There is a Supervisor with them who organises them and keeps an eye on them and what they do. The idea is that they will help our own working party (who are not getting any younger!) to keep the churchyard neat and tidy.

There was a coffee morning, organised by the ladies of the village, in aid of MacMillan nurses which raised the sum of £279. I can confirm how delicious the cakes were! Well done to all those who organised it and baked the cakes.

Whenever there are five Sundays in the month, the four villages (Heath and Reach, Hockliffe, Eggington and Billington), take it in turn to host a joint service and in October it was our turn to be host. It was lovely to have people from all of the four churches which meant that we had almost a full church. Afterwards, we went across to the village hall for refreshments and a chat; it was so nice for the churches to get together like this.

By the time you read this, we will have had our Remembrance Day Service with refreshments in the village hall, which gives the attendees a chance to warm up over a cup of tea.

### ***What will be happening in Eggington?***

We are now looking forward to Christmas when we celebrate not only the birth of the Christ Child but also the friendship of our friends both in the village and in the wider community.

All are welcome to come to our Carol Service on December 17<sup>th</sup> at 7.00pm with mulled wine and mince pies afterwards.

On Christmas Eve, December 24<sup>th</sup>, at 3.00pm, there will be a Christingle Service for all ages especially the younger ones.

Then at 11.15pm on Christmas Eve, there will be our Midnight Communion Service.

We wish you all a Joyful and Peaceful Christmas filled with love and friendship, and may you also have a Happy New Year.



**Paul Brown**



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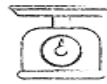


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## *Stained Glass Window Christmas Biscuits:*

Makes about 24 biscuits; 30 mins to prepare and 10-12 minutes to cook, plus cooling  
129 calories / serving

These Christmas stained-glass window biscuits are perfect for hanging on your tree – the lights will twinkle through the ‘windows’, which are simply melted boiled sweets.

### **Ingredients**

250g plain flour  
1 tsp ground ginger  
100g (3 1/2oz) icing sugar, plus extra for dusting  
150g cold butter, diced  
1 orange, finely zested  
1 large egg yolk  
150g (5oz) clear, coloured boiled sweets



### **Method**

1. Heat the oven to gas 4, 180°C, fan 160°C and line two baking sheets with nonstick baking paper. In a food processor, pulse the flour, ginger and icing sugar once or twice to combine. Add the butter and pulse until the mixture looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add the zest, yolk and 1 tsp water and pulse again until a soft dough forms.
2. Remove the dough and gently press into a flat disc on a lightly floured surface. Wrap in clingfilm and chill for about 20 mins or until firm enough to roll out.
3. Cut the dough in half to make it easier to roll out. Roll thinly to about 5mm on a lightly floured surface. Use 7cm (2 3/4in) Christmas cutters (stars, hearts, snowmen, Christmas trees etc) to cut out 12 biscuits. Use a flat spatula to carefully lift each one onto a lightly oiled baking sheet. Allow about 2cm (3/4in) of space around each one. Gently combine the cuttings, then re-roll and cut out more biscuits. Poke a small hole at the top of each biscuit, to thread ribbon to hang them.
4. Cut a 3cm (1in) hole in the middle of each biscuit using a miniature Christmas cutter such. Lightly crush the sweets in their wrappers with a rolling pin, then put the pieces in the middles of the biscuits. The sweets should be level with the top of the dough, not above. Use one colour or a mix for a multicoloured effect.
5. Repeat the process with the other half of the dough to make 12 more biscuits. Pop both trays into the freezer for 10 mins until the dough is very firm. This will ensure the biscuits keep their shape in the oven.
6. Bake for 10-15 mins or until lightly gold around the edges with melted middles. Remove from the oven and allow to cool on the baking sheets for a few minutes before carefully transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Pierce the holes again while they are still warm and soft, and thread with ribbon to hang on the Christmas tree.

## ... *The Incarnation* by Rev'd Kirsty Borthwick

*A series exploring some of the ways  
we encounter God in the world and in our lives.*

*Encountering  
God in ...*

*(Content warning: this article includes a brief reference to infertility and baby loss.)*

The promise that we encounter God in the Incarnation is at the heart of the Christian faith. Without Christmas and its celebration that God is with us - that God is Emmanuel - our faith is robbed of all its beauty and hope. It's because humanity and divinity are united in the person of Christ that we can hope in the promise that in Christ we can share in the divine life. In Christ, God enters into our human flesh so that our bodies can share with Christ in his resurrection. Everything we believe, and everything we hope in, hinges on the Incarnation (literally, "to make flesh"). It's an event that changes everything. In the Incarnation, we discover the hope that all creation will be transformed.

But what I find really exciting, especially as we enter the season of Advent, is the fact that the Incarnation doesn't start in the stable in Bethlehem on Christmas morning.

Let me explain...

There's a tradition, laid down during the early years of the church, that Mary is the Theotokos, the Mother of God. This title tends to be contentious today because its proper purpose has been forgotten. It's not a claim that Mary is somehow more than human and it's certainly not trying to put Mary on a pedestal above God. In fact, it's a title central to properly understanding the Incarnation. We can confidently call Mary the Mother of God because she really does carry God in her womb. As an ordinary human, an ordinary woman, Mary is called to do an extraordinary thing: to bear God into his world.

And that also means that the Incarnation, doesn't start on Christmas morning, it starts with the Annunciation - with Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to bear a son.

And that means the Incarnation isn't some kind of magic trick - Jesus doesn't suddenly become God when he is born or at some moment later in life (like his baptism). No, Christ is fully human and fully divine from the moment he is conceived.





He is only ever both human and divine. We only ever encounter him, even before his birth, as our incarnate God. With John the Baptist, who leaps for joy in Elizabeth's womb when a pregnant Mary and Elizabeth greet each other (Luke 1.39-45), we can celebrate with joy that God is with us even before Mary places Jesus in the manger, even before we encounter him at Christmas.

There are few things as fragile and mysterious as the early days of a pregnancy. Those who deeply long for a child and those who know the pain of baby loss can speak so clearly of the vulnerability that marks the days and weeks after conception. Our incarnate God dwelt in that vulnerability; he made his home in that fragility. Similarly, birth itself is wrapped up in mystery and vulnerability - the pain of the one giving birth and the cries of the newborn as it begins life beyond the womb.

Our world feels wrought with vulnerability and fragility and pain at the moment. The war in Ukraine continues apace (as with so many other conflicts around the world), the threats of climate change loom larger than ever, and increasing costs of living are pushing more and more people in our own communities towards the breadline.

Paul's letter to the Romans (8.18-25) gives us a lens through which we can begin to understand this fragility that shapes our world:

*"I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.*

*We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labour, and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

Advent, this season in which we look towards the hope of Christmas, is as a time especially fitting for leaning into the fragility of our lives and of all creation. It's a time in which we're called to recognise the labour pains of God's Kingdom in the foretelling of Christ's birth and the foretelling of the new heavens and new earth. So, my prayer for us all in the lead up to Christmas this year is this: that filled with the promise that God is with us even in the womb of Mary we might look on the labour pains of the new creation with faith; the faith to hope in things unseen and to wait patiently for all that God has promised. It's in such faithful hope – the hope that God is with us in the most dark and mysterious and vulnerable of places - that we are promised an encounter with our incarnate God.

**Mother Kirsty**

# *Recycling blister packs – an update*



Last Advent, All Saints Eco Church Group launched its Medicinal Blister Pack recycling initiative.

The Group are looking at steps we can take, be they big or small, to reduce or reverse damage to the environment.

One way of contributing to this aim is by re-cycling medicinal blister packs, the sort commonly used to package prescription and non-prescription tablets. These can be reformed into products such as planters, furniture, and shop fittings.

Every kilo of plastic that goes into landfill produces 3kg of carbon dioxide as it breaks down. So far, we have collected 30kg of empty blister packs preventing 90kg of CO2 from going back into the environment.

To put this in perspective, a young tree absorbs around 0.59kg of CO2 per annum whilst a mature tree absorbs around 25kg. So we have achieved the equivalent of planting around 152 saplings or saving 3 mature trees.

A collection box has been provided at All Saints Church. This box is emptied periodically and the contents taken to the Superdrug pharmacy in Milton Keynes (currently only branches of Superdrug which have a pharmacy are participating).

For all of you participating in the scheme please ensure your drop offs are just blister packs. Volunteers have found bottles, bottle tops and even a pair of glasses in the box.

Collection and storage space at All Saints is limited. If you are visiting Milton Keynes and are able to drop one of the full bags from All Saints that would be most helpful. Please contact the church office 01525 381418 to arrange the collection. This is a modest start, but contributions of used blister packs are growing as word spreads about this way of becoming better custodians of the planet we live on.



Such is the enthusiasm for this project that we are now exploring ways in which we can expand the project into the wider community.

We would like to thank you all for helping us towards a brighter future.

***Jaine Holford and the Eco Church Group***

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