

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

September 2023

70p

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September 6th
at 7pm

Please support
Bike 'n' Hike teams
from all the churches
September 9th

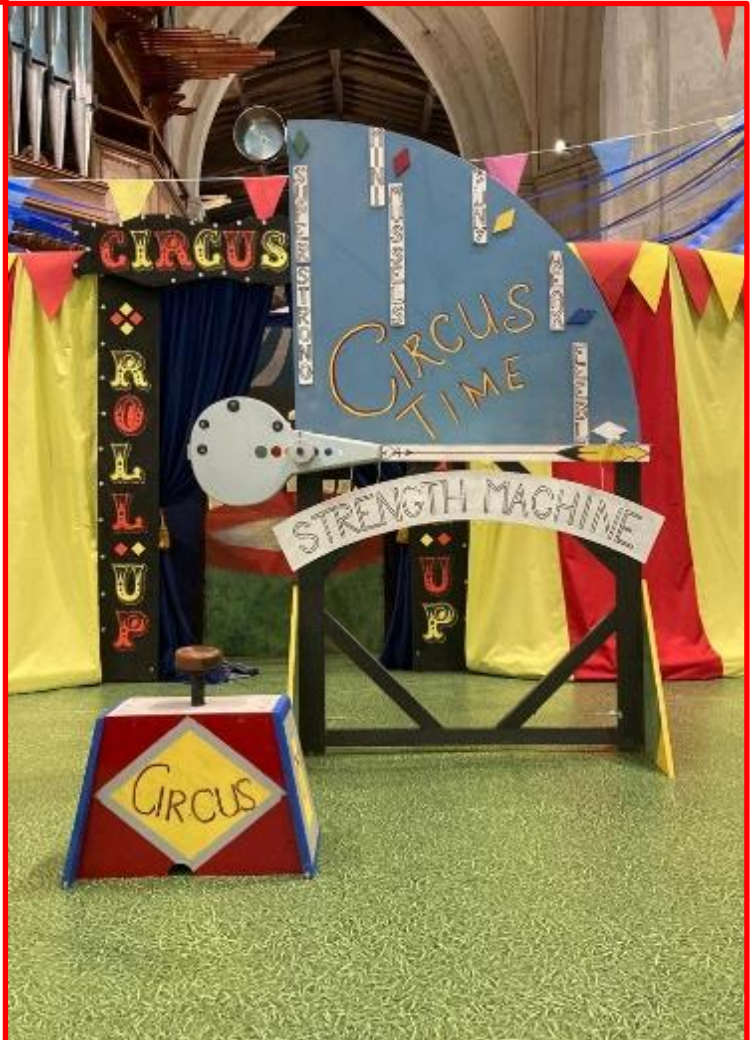
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Ceremonials

Fr. Noel:
Daily Prayer

Organ scholar
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is moving on

News and views
from other
team churches



All Saints Leighton Buzzard

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In Vacancy

The Vicarage,
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Canon Grant Fellows 01525 381418

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I thought that to accompany the series of recent articles on aspects of worship I might write something about what we *do*, as well as what we wear and say. Because the ceremonials often have reasons behind them, though sometimes the reasons are more recent than the ceremony!

Firstly, a general observation: worship is often poetic. We use everything available to us to expand our horizons further than this world allows. Ceremonies are like windows helping us to see further. Their meanings and purposes are fluid, and never completed: there is always the potential for change. This is true of our words, actions and symbols. Rituals are the poetry of action: they are to the body as poetry and music are to the mind.

That said, there are specific things that underlie much of what we do: in a Eucharist, the choir and servers in their robes embody the angels who worship alongside us in heaven. Even more incongruously perhaps, the clergy in their vestments embody Jesus our great High Priest! The clothes themselves have 'everyday' origins, but in their ornate evolution they help us remember that this is a ritual, and that to be ordained is to be 'set aside' for the particular purpose of embodying Jesus in His threefold Ministry as Prophet, Priest, and King. All of us are called to that vocation in baptism. Those set aside are called to embody it for the Church in leadership and worship.

The Eucharist begins with a Procession. Partly practical, this is also symbolic. Jesus, escorted by angels, descends to earth. The procession embodies the incarnation and ends, as the incarnation did, at the altar, as Jesus was offered on the Cross. Processions are led, sometimes by a thurible with incense, as the pillar of fire led the Israelites out of Egypt announcing the presence of God among us, or alternatively by the Cross that we follow throughout our Christian lives. The cross may be escorted by candles which honour it: light is a sign that something is important (which is why lamps burn above altars and where the holy oils or the sacrament are reserved).

Later, at the Gospel procession, the Minister carrying the Gospel book (escorted by candles and a cross) embodies Jesus preaching and teaching in the midst of the crowds, proclaiming the Good news of the Kingdom. We stand to hear the Gospel as a mark of respect for the fact that in these words Jesus Himself speaks to us personally.

The preacher uses a pulpit to be seen and heard, and to see their audience, but also as a sign of the importance of the sermon. Altars are raised up on steps - the word 'altar' means somewhere raised up high. The first altars were erected on mountains, that were imagined as literally closer to the heavens. For us, the altar is both a place of sacrifice like the altars of the Temple in Jerusalem, but it is also at the same time the table of the Last Supper, when Jesus broke bread with His friends, and washed their feet.

Above all, the thing about rituals is that their meaning is 'thrown forward' like poetry. They mean how they make us feel and react in the presence of God. If words were enough, we would use them alone. But they are not: we are physical beings, and so God became incarnate, and enters bread and wine; and we worship Him in physical ways, which is all that rituals are: prayers we perform, rather than speak.

Fr. Bernard

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8am Holy Communion

9.30am Parish Eucharist

11.30am (usual pattern but can vary occasionally)

1st Sunday: Messy Mass

3rd Sunday: All Age Service

2nd & 4th Sunday: Holy Baptism

6pm Evening Prayer

1st Sunday: Choral Evensong Plus

3rd Sunday: Sung with hymns

(NO choir) followed by Benediction

2nd & 4th Sunday: Said Evensong

Weekdays:

Holy Communion

7.30pm Tuesday

(Service of Healing on 3rd Tuesday)

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8am Said Eucharist

10am Parish Eucharist

6pm Evensong

www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8am: Holy Communion

11am Holy Communion (in church & via Zoom)

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday - Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th 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:

1st Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

2nd Sunday: 'In the Community', at Astral Park

3rd Sunday: Family Service

4th 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.

1st 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, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

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

Contact Details on Page 2.

News Roundup

The Coffee Shop reopens on Tuesday 5th September at 10am.

*** **

Look out for these new bags in church. Mothers' Union have been providing Busy Bags for children to use during the services for many years. We hope that these new bags will be useful for babies and toddlers visiting the church.

*** **



6th September at 7pm: a special open meeting with Bishop Richard and Ven. Dave to gather the views of all on our next incumbent. This will build upon the inputs already received via our recent leaflet, for which we are grateful. Please join us if you can and also help to spread the message so that as many as want to attend are able so to do.



Worth a smile

Scientists have finally discovered exactly how much sleep a human being needs ... just five minutes more.



I know, I know, when people see a cat's litter box, they say, "Oh, have you got a cat?". But someday, just *once* I want to say, "No, it's for visitors."



When I was young, I was poor. But after several years of hard work, I am no longer young.



A chrysanthemum by any other name would be... much easier to spell.



If they squeeze olives to get olive oil, how do they get baby oil?



*The morning after the night before
– Lindsay's office after Holiday Club.
"Feeling tired but happy", she said,
"and not going to tackle this for a day or two."*

Parish Registers

Holy Matrimony, July:

21: Andrew Mortimer & Angela Scott; 29: Paul Yarnell & Sorcha Smith

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

Holy Baptism, July:

9: Frederick Haydn John; 23: Christopher John Uffindell, Noah Henry Watson, Florence Maeve Simmons

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

R.I.P. July:

3: Rosemary Mason at All Saints; 10: Peter Fensome at Crownhill; 14: Sheila Piedot at All Saints; 19: Marjorie Bewick at All Saints; 20: Derek Nicholls at Crownhill; 21: Carol Green at Crownhill; 24: Mary Titchmarsh at Crownhill; 26: Joyce Huggins at St. Michael & All Angels

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

Years Mind, September:

1: Peter Rolls, Ruth Cursons, Christopher Mawer, Barbara Kirby; 2: Sheila Binns; 3: Stella Aris, Ben Reeve, Irene Hillis, Leslie Slater, Charles Moore, Bryan Gilbert; 5: Betty Hill, Jim Bright; 6: Brenda Burchell; 8: John MacDonald; 9: Les Wood; 10: Edith Boyce, Leslie Scheu, Edward Pyman, Milbrough Mary Morgan; 11: Thomas Grant, Peggy Wallace; 13: John King; 14: Clive Slater, Winifred Weeden, Rose Magee; 16: Peggy King, John Tennant; 17: Thomas McKinley; 18: Stuart Mead, Leslie Howard, Vernon Jessup; 21: Jim Wright, Margaret Austin; 22: William Kingham; 24: Joyce Pim; 25: Ruby West; 26: Freda Goodger; 27: Beatrice Thompson, Brian Cox; 28: Sandra Keen, Norman Littleton; 29: William Brantom, Gordon Durrington; 30: Margaret Madigan



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Pulford VA Lower School

Head Teacher: Rev'd Dave Heather, MBE

Office Manager: Mrs Alison Quick

Tel: 01525 372188

Website: www.pulfordschool.org

A church school for
a whole community



Looking Forward & Back

I am sitting writing this article in mid-August on a (rare) sunny morning and thoughts of school life seem somewhat distant. But it is a time of the year when we can both look back on the last term and school year and look forward with excitement (occasionally nervous excitement) at what the year ahead will hold.



For me, many of the answers of what lies ahead can be glimpsed from the goings on at Pulford at the very end of last term. I saw the children of KS2 deliver a wonderfully entertaining performance of 'Robin and the Sherwood Hoodies', full of confidence, fun and a real sense of a team effort.

I then had the privilege of attending the leavers service at All Saints where I witnessed young people at the end of a journey but fully prepared for the next stage.

As they walked out of church singing 'One more step along the road I go' they exuded a sense that they had lived out the school's vision and that through faith, hope and love they had, indeed, reached their potential.

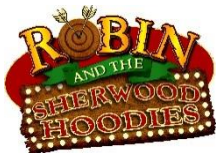
So now, in looking forward to a new academic year, I have the utmost confidence that a similar journey will be followed by the next cohort. Of course, the stops along the way will be quite different and there will be fresh challenges to overcome and new achievements to celebrate, but the fundamental mission of Pulford will be the same and we will see, come July 2024, a similar group of confident Year 4s ready to take that next big step to middle school.

I am looking forward, along with the whole Board, of playing a small part in that journey, so here's to a wonderful 2023-24!

Ed Price, Chair of Governors

Robin and the Sherwood Hoodies by Craig Hawes: "A tale of tights, fights and footlights, this hysterical show is a riotous romp through the medieval mayhem of Merry England, splattered with shocks and surprises, crazy characters and comic capers.

With a score full of catchy, show-stopping songs and a wonderfully witty script as sharp as an arrow, this musical comedy is on target to send you all a-quiver!" [MusicLineDirect.com]





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Selections

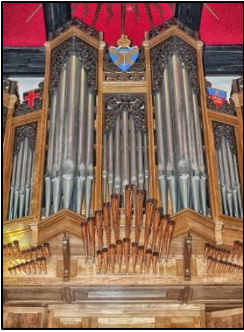
*Pet, gift and garden.
Household, kitchen tools and
electrical items.
Calor Gas, DIY and repairs.
Memorial.*



selections_pet_garden

On a musical note..... 

Moving on: a reflection by Sam Kemp



From September 2021 to July 2023, I was organ scholar of All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard. In retrospect, it is perhaps not too hyperbolic to say that my experience at All Saints was utterly extraordinary. When I joined, aged 16, it provided an exquisite insight into the Anglican choral tradition from the outset.

At my very first service in September 2021, I accompanied the choir for Hubert Parry's coronation anthem 'I was glad', which was sung amazingly by the choir. I played Parry's anthem three more times at All Saints.

Over the course of the next two years, I accompanied the choir for regular Sunday Eucharists and monthly evensongs, undertaking many pieces of 'cathedral-type' choral repertoire, such as Herbert Sumsion's 'They that go down to the sea in ships', Gerald Finzi's 'God is gone up', Ralph Vaughan-William's 'Antiphon' and Louis Vierne's 'Messe Solennelle'. Every time, the choir sang them brilliantly.

I have had opportunities to undertake various musical engagements outside of the normal liturgical setting of All Saints. In February 2023, I gave an organ recital at All Saints to a large audience, including works by J.S Bach, Louis Vierne and Jean Langlais. On Good Friday 2023, I accompanied the sterling performance of John Stainer's oratorio 'The Crucifixion', which saw our choir join with the Leighton Buzzard Festival Singers. In April 2023, I accompanied a Choral Evensong at Canterbury Cathedral, where the choir sang Wood's anthem 'O thou, the central orb', in conjunction with Sumsion's Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in A. None of these opportunities would have been the same had it not been for the Director of Music, Paul Dickens, whose jurisdiction over the music at All Saints, in my opinion, has been unparalleled. In addition, my own occasional direction of the choir was significantly aided by the invaluable supportive input of the head and deputy head choristers.

Overall, my experience at All Saints has been absolutely fantastic.

In retrospect, the experience gained was immense, and will be invaluable for my upcoming position at the Chapel Royal at Hampton Court.

I wish to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to Paul Dickens, the head and deputy head choristers, all the choir, the clergy and congregation of All Saints Church, Leighton Buzzard.

Sam Kemp, retiring Organ Scholar



Calendar of Events

Open meeting with
the Churchwardens, Bishop Richard & Archdeacon Dave
to gather views on the appointment of our next incumbent.
All Saints Wednesday 6th September at 7pm.
ALL WELCOME

3rd September: Services as usual including All Age Communion All Saints 11.30am
Bereavement Support Café Coffee Shop, All Saints 2.30pm – 4pm

6th September: Lunch Club in the North Transept, All Saints 1pm.
Tickets £5.00 available from the Coffee Shop.

15th September: Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm

17th September: Services as usual including Pet Service All Saints 11.30am

30th September: Harvest Games & Supper All Saints 5.00pm.
Tickets available from the Parish Office.



7th October: Quiz Evening Eggington Village Hall. See p. 17 for details.

APPOINTING A NEW VICAR

THE PROCESS IS LONG AND COMPLEX



THE PREACHING
COMPETITION

→
THE
CONGREGATION
VOTE OFF
THE LEAST
INSPIRING



THE EUCHARISTIC
PRAYER AUDITION

→
THE
CONGREGATION
VOTE OFF
THE LEAST
DIGNIFIED



THE 'VISITING
THE SICK' TEST

→
THE
CONGREGATION
VOTE OFF
THE LEAST
COMPASSIONATE



THE ROBIN-
CONTEST

→
THE
CONGREGATION
VOTE OFF
THE LEAST
STYLISH



THE CHURCH MEETING
CHALLENGE

→
THE
LAST
ONE AWAKE
GETS
THE JOB



Sponsored Bike 'n Hike

BEDS AND HERTS HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

Bike 'n Hike in Beds 'n Herts



Support All Saints Bike 'n Hike Team

This year we have a bumper team doing the Bike 'n Hike on 9 September: Katrina, Dorothy, Brian and Abby from the choir; Abby's partner Chris; Emma and Steve; Maggie, and Mother Kirsty.

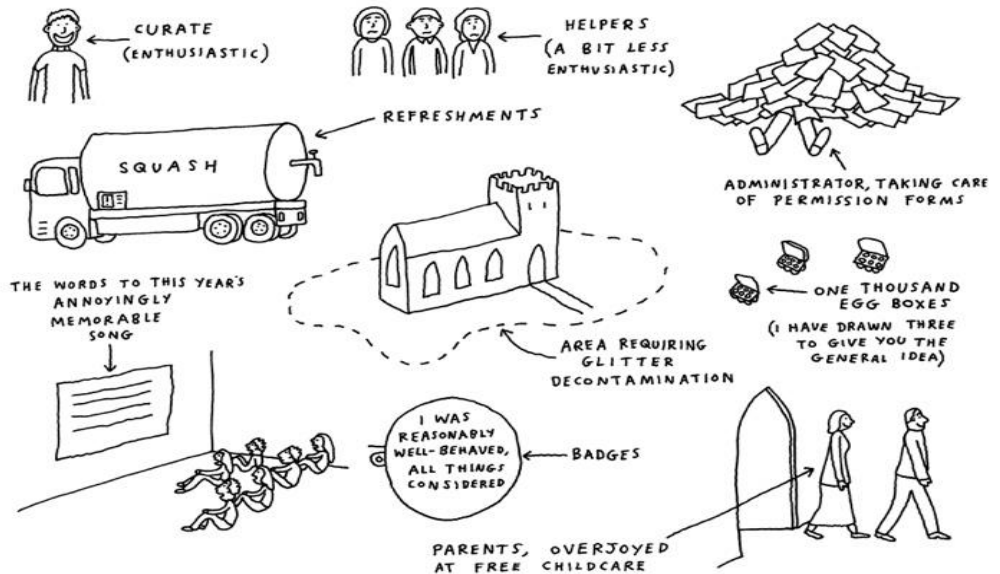
We would love as many people as possible to sponsor us. Half of the money we raise comes straight to All Saints, while the rest goes to BHHCT, who have been very generous to All Saints in the past, and support churches all over the area, including others in the Ouzel Valley Team.

We are very happy to receive sponsorship after the event, either on paper sponsor forms or via JustGiving, using the QR code above, or the link:

<https://www.justgiving.com/team/all-saints1b>

Katrina Grant

THE HOLIDAY CLUB





on ...

Groups and activities, sustaining the Christian community of The Ouzel Valley Team



After months of planning, the Circus came to town for this year's holiday club in August.

The Ring Master (who wrote the play and gave himself a dramatic role!), was ably supported by Connie, the Stage Manager, whose role was to explain the daily Bible stories and Billy, the comic hired-hand, always eager to perform a themed circus act!

100 children were split into 5 groups: Jiggly Jugglers, Amazing Acrobats, Big Toppers, Mighty Magicians and Fantastic Flyers. The daily timetable saw all groups interact together in the nave, joining in songs choreographed and musically led by Sian Price. The circus themed song 'Roll up, roll up, come and see the circus' was written by Ed Price; the very catchy tune was composed by Phillip Stopford; and a jazzy backing track was added by Paul Whittington.



Circus Time Holiday Club 2023



Interactive with daily video themed stories (on the TV screen) the children learnt about:

Monday: Noah & Abraham/Human Canon Ball (you'll have to ask what happened!)

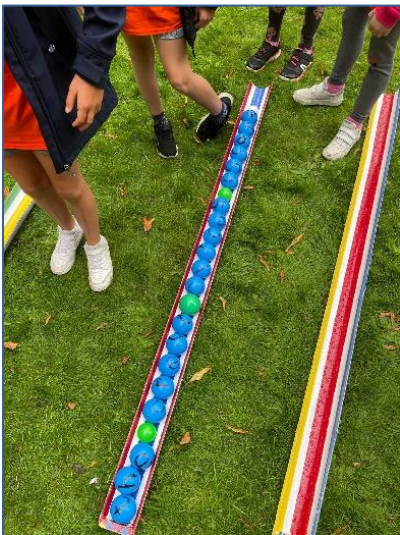
Tuesday: Daniel in the Lion's Den/Lenny the Friendly Lion

Wednesday: Samuel in the Temple/Strongman

Thursday: Peter Escapes from Prison/Billy the Escapologist

Friday: The Fiery Furnace/Talent Contest

Led outside daily, the groups joined in games. Special thanks to Colin Fox for co-ordinating and making them with his skilled woodworking. Back in their groups, the children made themed crafts to the Bible stories, to take home, reminding them of their week's enjoyment.



Special thanks for helping it to be a fun week must go to the many volunteers (too many to name individually) for their invaluable help, Chez Pike and Jo Dawson for the stage set design and build, D. Gudgeon Family Builders for their talented woodworking and to Lindsay, the main co-ordinator and Boss!

Sally Kerr

Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld & Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Spiritual Mini-Breaks

Not all of us get the chance to go away over summer, whether due to personal circumstances or by choice. At the start of the summer holidays, Revd Steve Marsh spoke about the value of taking a “spiritual mini-break” to replenish our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. Even just a few hours can be so beneficial if we make time to lay down everyday concerns and do something that restores us.

During July and August, we’ve been reflecting this in our Sunday activities, aiming to make the most of our lovely surroundings up at Astral Park, and enjoy the peacefulness of smaller gatherings.



Some people refer to creation as the “Second Book of God”, or even the First Book. At the end of July we went for a walk around the area, stopping at various points to be reminded of how scripture draws on the natural world for its inspiration and images. Psalm 148 speaks about all of creation and people of all ages praising God, as the only name worth praising. The following words resonated with us whilst visiting the Astral Park orchard:

‘But what happens when we live God’s way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard – things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity’ (Galatians 5:22-23, Message version).

The playground at Astral Park was a good visual reminder of how children are our teachers in spiritual matters: before blessing a group of children, Jesus said:

‘Unless you accept God’s kingdom in the simplicity of a child, you’ll never get in’ (Mark 10: 15-16). Our walk ended with a shared picnic – indoors due to the weather!

On another Sunday we reflected on one of Jesus’s resurrection appearances, when he cooked breakfast for his disciples on the beach, having transformed a fruitless night’s fishing into a miraculous catch of fish. Together we thought about what makes a happy breakfast, how we can start our days well even when busy, and the way that sharing our everyday reality with Jesus helps us to live distinctive and authentic lives (Romans 12:2).

Katharine Reedy

St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Churchwardens: Brian Speller: 210565

Tom Ware



God's Creation – Human Life and the Flowers of the Field

I write this article having just returned from a cottage holiday on a working farm, deep in the Cornwall countryside. It was one of those hideaway places where you are not particularly worried about encountering a tractor or lorry on a narrow country lane. Just as it happens, I had to reverse up for both on the homeward journey, but I put it down to the full holiday experience!

As well as sharing a peaceful time surrounded by farm animals and fields, we visited the Eden Project. It is a wonderful place to experience God's creation in the plant life of our planet, in all its variety, and how dependant human life is upon this. The Rainforest and Mediterranean Biomes stir all of our senses to understand the order of life as God created it but, tragically, also the fragility of this created order. It was great then to see both young and old enjoying themselves whilst learning something at the same time.

'Then God said, 'Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.' And it was so. And God saw that it was good.' Genesis 1.11-12

Closer to home, by the time you read this St Nicholas will have held its Flower Festival and the congregation will have welcomed a new child into God's family.

Based upon the theme of 'Verses & Rhymes', the Flower Festival will be an opportunity for people of all ages to share in glorifying God by expressing the emotion of words we know well in the beauty of flower arrangements. I mentioned earlier how plant life can arouse our senses and this is more obvious in flowers with the variety of their colours and scents. Of course, the church building plays its part too, as its holiness is enhanced by the displays that contributors design and set in place to help focus visitors' thoughts, and maybe even prompt a prayer of thanksgiving. A huge thank you to Carol Speller and her team for coordinating this fundraiser; to those who crafted displays; to those who made and served refreshments; and to all who visited.

On Saturday 26th August 2023 our churchwarden Tom and his wife Theresa's baby girl Anastasia will be baptized by Fr. Noel. They have been worshipping at St. Nicholas for a few years since moving into the village. It will be wonderful to welcome their families, especially Theresa's family from Germany. Surrounded by the many flowers, it will be a beautiful occasion to celebrate the joy of family life.

Please note the date of our Harvest Lunch at St. Nicholas on
Sunday 8th October 2023 from 12.00pm.

Geoff Marchant

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Sandra Brewin 373644;

Julia Haviland 850380



Prof. Josh Pollard

“Discovery of Mesolithic pits in Bedfordshire astounds archaeologists”

When a large number of Mesolithic pits were recently discovered at Linnere near Houghton Regis there was a lot of both local and national interest. A key role in the investigation is being played by Prof. Joshua Pollard of Southampton University.

Joshua is a Billington lad, spending his youth here in Little Billington and living next door to Mike and Marjory Grant.

Prof Pollard says: *This is an important discovery, of national significance. We know of other large Mesolithic pits, mostly dating to around 8500-6500 BC, including examples next to Stonehenge, but those at Linnere are exceptional in terms of their number (about 24 so far) and distribution across such a wide area. Until a few years ago we imagined Mesolithic hunter-gatherers didn't make much impact on the landscape, and weren't involved in creating sites on a monumental scale. Whatever the purpose of the Linnere pits (hunting traps, place-markers, or something linked to gatherings and ceremonies), they disprove this image.*



The fieldwork was undertaken in advance of housing development by two commercial archaeological units - MOLA and Albion Archaeology.

Prof Pollard admits that unwittingly, he must have driven over the pits many times!

***David Edwards
with thanks to
Prof. Joshua Pollard***

**NB: Afternoon Cream Tea
Saturday 16 September
2.30 pm.**

**Calories are not counted
here in Billington.**

St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634

Paul Brown 751861



In July, we had our Cream Teas. The weather preceding and afterwards was wet and cool but on the day itself, the sun came out and it was warm and sunny all day! This encouraged people to come and sample the scones, cream and jam which were served at the tables by a group of Guides. Live music was provided by Roger and his Milk Floats. Although we had over 70 chairs, the afternoon was so popular that we ran out of them!

Including the sale of books and jigsaws, we made about £410. Well done to all who helped before, during and afterwards including the Guides who kept smiling and cheerful as they tried to keep up with serving everyone.

Those of you who have a keen eye will have noticed a difference as you passed the church! We have been planning for a while to reduce the height of the hedge alongside of the road due to the fact that the members of the working party are getting older and cannot reach as high as they used to! Also it was proving difficult to see oncoming traffic as the road bends round the churchyard. Our thanks go to Fiona and Steve Peck for organising the hedge cutting and tidying up afterwards.



Dates for your diaries:

1st October: Harvest Festival Service at 9.30am. Donations of dry goods to be given to Leighton-Linlade Helpers for their food bank. Collection to go to the Bishop's Uganda Appeal

4th October: "Elevenses" in the church – come and have a cuppa and a chat.

7th October: Quiz Evening.



**QUIZ
NIGHT**

£8 per person to include a ploughman's supper. Teams of no more than 6; bring your own drinks and glasses.

Please contact Angela Dyer on LB 210420 to book your place.

Unfortunately places are limited so pre-booking is essential.

Paul Brown



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Vergers

By Jenny Huskisson



You may have noticed at weddings, funerals and civic services, people dressed in black gowns and sometimes black cassocks, looking like a pair of black crows guiding people to their places. Sometimes one might even carry a black stick in front of them. The black stick is a verge, and the “crows” are vergers.

The office of the present-day verger is like some hymn books, both ancient and modern; the duties have changed over time and varies from church to church to cathedral. Some vergers have a paid position, but in many churches the jobs associated with verging are voluntary, and cover things from greeting visitors, preparing the church for services, acting as sides-persons, cleaning the church and many other duties involved in keeping our churches open.

The verger gets his title from the “verge” or rod which is carried in procession before dignitaries. In medieval times it served to keep dogs at bay, force ways through crowds or as a truncheon to keep order.

At All Saints, vergers are involved in many of the different jobs looking after the church, but all are involved in the preparation of the church and looking after the congregations at weddings and funerals.

The vergers at All Saints are members of the St Albans Diocesan Guild of Vergers which is a branch of the National Church of England Guild of Vergers. When joining the guild vergers commit to care for the House of God, for the people who worship there and the people who visit there. The Guild organises training and social events for its members, both at national and branch level. This gives a chance for members who do similar jobs in their own church to talk about similar concerns and receive supportive fellowship.

Once a year a Corporate communion is held by the branch for members in St Albans diocese.

The photograph shows two members who were admitted to the guild at that service in May this year. The branch chaplain, Fr Andrew Ferrar presented our own Jackie Rudom and Lynn Jones from St Albans Abbey for admission by the branch chairperson Mrs Lindsay Bevis.

Jenny Huskisson





Tell out my soul:

*A series exploring how elements of our worship
What we do and why we do it.*

This month:

Daily Prayer ...

by Rev'd Noel McGeeney

I write this letter to you, God's own beloved, to reflect upon Daily Prayer and the four pillars upon which it stands. The giant shoe company NIKE has a strap line which says "**just do it**". So it is with daily prayer: **just do it**. Join us for morning prayer on Zoom every morning, Monday to Saturday, 9am for ten minutes; that is a good place to start on daily prayer.

When it comes to private prayer, it is vital that we know the pillars upon which our daily prayer stands, for the confidence it gives us in the action of the Holy Spirit throughout our daily lives. It is the Spirit of God in us that calls back to God, thus the beatitude, *'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God'*. Our work is to be in right relationship with ourselves and others so that we are pure in heart, which allows the spirit in us to connect with the Holy Spirit. You can't sin and pray at the same time! So we cultivate our hearts to be receptive through the use of Mantras, Awareness, Examen, Lectio, Mindfulness, etc; whatever works to get us prepared to listen to our inner voice.

I have also heard it said that our emotions are the vernacular of the Spirit, so we cultivate our capacity to sit with our deepest emotions so as to reveal the action of the Holy Spirit. We meet God as we are not as we would like to be. I know many are familiar with A C T S as an entry point into prayer: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication. Five minutes daily will be a tonic for your spirit. Whatever practices work for you, **just do it**, so you cultivate your capacity for deep listening to your inner self.

1 Thessalonians 4:11 says *'make it your ambition to live a quiet life'* and St. Ignatius says, *'try to keep your soul always in peace and quiet'*. Whatever works for you to calm your mind long enough to pay attention to your body mind and spirit.

The four pillars for Daily Prayer are: Silence and solitude / slowing / Sabbath / simplicity.

1. Silence and Solitude

The writer, Henri Nowen, said, *'without solitude it is virtually impossible to live an interior life'*. In order to connect with God, we need to disconnect from distraction. The signs and symptoms of a life without silence and solitude include: looking for quick fix spiritual bites, the tyranny of the urgent, that is always reacting to what's happening in your life; having an undercurrent of anxiety; getting exhausted; having low grade energy; emotional unhealth; reacting to slights real or imagined; getting angry or sad, often both.



The alternative is to seek out silence and solitude; to decompress from the non-stop stimulation of modern society. Corrie ten Boom said, *'if the devil can't make you sin, he will make you busy.'* Sadly we are more busy than bad; more distracted than being non-spiritual. In this digital age we are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion. The busier Jesus got the more he sought silence and solitude.



2. Slowing

What happens when we slow down? We begin to feel again, the whole gamut of emotions; not just joy, gratitude and delight but also the sadness, anger, doubt and anxiety. In silence and solitude, we are likely to feel the lousy emotions first and we do so in a safe place, a place where all our strong emotions are exposed and painfully so. Rather than these strong emotions leaking out upon our nearest and dearest they are exposed within the Father's love, for whom we are His beloved. Slowing down results in getting a perspective upon our own life and our humble place in it. Having placed ourselves in the safety of God's presence we come to stop and experience Sabbath.

3. Sabbath

Sabbath means stop. Until we stop, we can't rest, delight or contemplate the glory of God. Stop working, stop wanting, stop worrying, and stop scrolling! The Sabbath time spent in daily prayer is how we fill our souls back up with life. **'Sabbath'** is actually an act of resistance to the modern way of life that is set up to keep us distracted. Sabbath is a way of saying *'Enough'*; we break our so very human addictions to the twin gods of accomplishment and accumulation. For many people their identity is tied up with having to accomplish more and accumulate more. It is time to enjoy what we already have and are as God's beloved. We need a reasonable amount of silence and solitude to slow down and stop.

4. Simplicity

It is useful to have some props to help us to pray: music, a lighted candle on a colourful cloth with a cross or other Christian symbols until we stop and simply abide in God's presence. Simplicity in all things is also resistance; Resistance to internal noise and external noise. This flows over to the rest of our lives. We become comfortable with our own company as our life in the spirit takes hold. Please read Ephesians 3:14-21. St. Francis De Sales said *'in everything love simplicity.'* Props are useful to daily prayer but not prayer. The only definition of prayer I have now is, *'pray as you can.'*



So **just do it**, pray as you can, props or no props, trust yourself. You are God's Beloved. Starting daily private prayer is like going on a first date, with all that involves, the anxiety and the anticipation. **Just do it.**

If you have persevered thus far with this letter then you realise prayer, daily, is not what you do but who you are becoming.

Fr. Noel McGeeney

Line drawings for this series by Judith Muskett

Help fight Fast Fashion... our Swishing Party is coming

We all like to look our best, but our love affair with fashion is causing serious damage to the environment. The fashion industry is responsible for 10% of global carbon emissions – more than aviation and shipping combined. Making synthetic material like polyester uses over 300 million barrels of oil a year while fabric dyes and microfibres pollute waterways and kill countless aquatic creatures. Did you know that 10,000 litres of water is used to produce every single pair of jeans?

What about the 92 million tons of clothing waste thrown away globally every year? It's enough to fill the Empire State building 1.5 times every day, but there is no such thing as "away" - just huge rotting landfill dumps and our wardrobes are full of things we don't wear.



Get Swishing

All Saints is planning to hold a Swishing Party in the coming months. It's a type of clothing swap. For a very small entrance fee, you can bring a limited number of good quality clothes or accessories – good wearable things that you may be bored with or perhaps no longer fit. You are given tokens in exchange and you can use these to choose clothes you like that other people bring. People can't bring bin bags of clothes and it's not a jumble sale. Swishing extends the life and use of good wearable clothes, and you get to update your wardrobe, save money and help the environment. We plan to make it a fun event with refreshments and a raffle and some other services on offer such as alterations or mending. What could you bring from your wardrobe?

If you are interested in helping with our Swishing Party please contact Katrina Grant or Jaime Holford.

In the meantime, here are some ideas:

- Buy less- ask yourself do you need this new garment.
- What's old is new again: shop in vintage or charity shops for stylish bargains.
- Shop responsibly – some retailers now make garments from recycled fabrics.
- Reduce water waste: don't launder clothes if they are not actually dirty.
- Repair or update: learn to mend – there are lots of "how to" videos on YouTube.
- Spread the love: donate unwanted clothes to charity.
- Less landfill – some retailers offer vouchers in exchange for clothes to recycle.

Katrina Grant

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