

**The Parish Magazine**  
**St Andrew's Church**  
**Old Headington**



**December 2023 & January 2024**

**50p**

## PARISH DIRECTORY

[www.standrewsheadington.co.uk](http://www.standrewsheadington.co.uk)

Enquiries about marriage and baptism should be made directly to the Vicar, by telephone or email.

The Clergy will gladly visit and (if requested) bring Holy Communion to people who are ill at home or in hospital, by arrangement.

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**THE NORMAN ARCH** is published on the last Saturday of each month.

*The parish magazine is named after the splendid Norman chancel arch in the church.*

Editor	Fr Darren McFarland
Sub-Editor	Vacant

**Deadline for next issue: 25<sup>th</sup> of each month**

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# December Calendar

1	F			none
2	S	Advent Quiet Day		10.00am
3	Sun	<b>1st SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>		
			BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am
4	M	Eucharist		9.30am
		Knit & Natter at Tea on Monday		3.00pm
		CMF Carol Service		7.30pm
5	T	Wedding		2.00pm
6	W	Nicholas, Bishop of Myra		
		Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
7	Th	Ambrose, Bishop of Milan		
		Little Fishes play group		9.30am
		Eucharist		7pm
8	F	The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary		none
		Health Walkers Christmas Lunch		10.30am
9	S	Lighting of Village Tree		4pm
10	Sun	<b>2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>		
			BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am
		<i>Salvation Army receive gifts</i>		
		<b>FOSAC Christmas Carol Evening</b>		6.00pm
11	M	Eucharist		9.30am
		St Andrew's School Nativity Service		6.00pm
12	T			
13	W	Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse		
		Eucharist	BCP	9.30am
		St Andrew's School Carol Service		10.30am
14	Th	John of the Cross, Poet		
		Little Fishes play group		9.30am
		Eucharist		7pm
15	F			none
16	S			none
17	S	<b>3rd SUNDAY OF ADVENT</b>		
			BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am
		<b>Lessons and Carols</b>		4.00pm
18	M	Eucharist		9.30am
		Knit & Natter at Tea on Monday		3.00pm
19	T			none
20	W	Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
21	Th	Eucharist		7pm
22	F			none
23	S			none
24	Sun	<b>ADVENT 4 / CHRISTMAS EVE</b>		
			BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am
		<b>Children's Service</b>		4.00pm
		<b>Midnight Mass</b>		11.00pm
25	M	<b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b>		
		<b>Eucharist</b>	BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am
26	T	<b>ST STEPHEN'S DAY</b>		10.00am
27	W	John, Apostle and Evangelist		
		Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
28	Th	The Holy Innocents		
		Eucharist		10.00am
29	F	Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury		none
30	S			none
31	Sun	<b>FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS</b>		
		<b>Eucharist</b>	BCP	8.00am
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		10.00am

## From the Registers

### Baptism

4<sup>th</sup> November

Isaac Medler

## December Readings

### 3<sup>rd</sup> December

Old Testament:

Psalm

New Testament:

Gospel:

### Advent Sunday

Isaiah 2.1-5

122

Romans 13.11-14

Matthew 24.36-44

### 10<sup>th</sup> December

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### Advent 2

Isaiah 40.1-11

85.8-end

2 Peter 3.8-15

Mark 1.1-8

### 17<sup>th</sup> December

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### Advent 3

Isaiah 61.1-4, 8-end

126

1Thess. 5.16-24

John 1.6-8, 19-28

### 24<sup>th</sup> December

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### Advent 4

2 Samuel 7.1-11, 16

89.1-4, 19-26

Romans 16.25-end

Luke 1.26-38

### 31<sup>st</sup> December

Old Testament:

Psalm

New Testament:

Gospel:

### Christmas 1

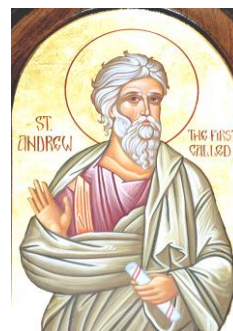
Isaiah 61.10 – 62.3

148.7 - end

Galatians 4.4-7

Luke 2.15-21

## St Andrew's Day



### Patronal Eucharist

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> November

7pm

Preacher – Fr Sam Durley

Curate of St Mary's, Barton



## DECEMBER MISSION OF THE MONTH



### The Porch day centre for the homeless

It has been a very busy year for us at The Porch and we are now providing 70 hot and freshly cooked lunches each day to the homeless and vulnerable of Oxford. This has meant that we have been able to provide our other support on mental health, addiction, accommodation and training to even more vulnerable people. We're also now open at weekends so we can provide breakfasts seven days a week.



Last month, we were proud to host the Lord Mayor as we all celebrated 20 years of dedicated service from our head chef, Lorraine. We think she has made and served about 250,000 delicious meals in this time! All these meals have been created with donated produce and often with vegetables cultivated in our own allotments.



The Porch continues to provide a reliable sanctuary and place of companionship, and this Christmas Day, as every year, we will be providing a full Christmas lunch with all the trimmings! We have just launched our Christmas campaign online where we are fundraising to help us run the Porch Community Café.



We would like to thank all of you at St Andrew's Church for your continued interest and support.

*The Porch Team*

### Christmas Flowers



Donations are needed  
and are now very welcome.

There is a plate in the baptistery and at  
the back of church on Sundays or you  
can use the card reader or pop it  
through the Vicarage door in a marked  
envelope.



***Please recycle your copy of the Norman Arch.  
Maybe pass it on to someone else!***

## ST ANDREW'S BOAT



The boat will be now out in church from  
26<sup>th</sup> November until 10<sup>th</sup> December.

Unwrapped gifts, for all ages, and also  
toiletries, can be placed in the boat at any  
time during this period,  
or brought to the Vicarage.

Alternatively you can visit  
[www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com)  
[search for Oxford Salvation Army](#)  
and donate using "Be a Star".

**Your generosity to this annual appeal is  
legendary  
so please continue to support the work of  
the Salvation Army this Christmas.**



U3A (University of the Third Age) Headington  
Branch meets on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of the  
month from 2-4pm in the main hall of Headington  
Community Centre in Gladstone Road.

5<sup>th</sup> December – Christmas Social

8<sup>th</sup> January – first meeting of 2024

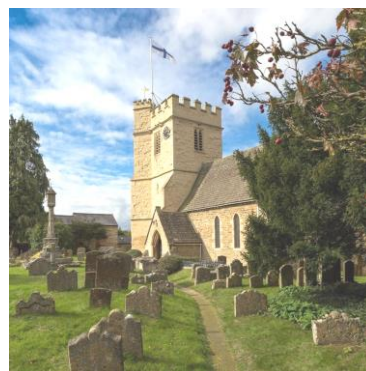


## (Community Emergency Foodbank)

Food parcels are distributed at our 3 CEF Cafés:  
Barton Community Church, Barton Neighbourhood  
Centre, Underhill Circus Barton OX3 9LS -  
Mondays & Wednesdays 12noon - 2pm  
St Francis' Church, Hollow Way OX3 7JP –  
Tuesdays & Fridays 12noon - 2pm  
Baptist Church, Chapel Lane, Littlemore, OX4 4QB  
– Thursdays 10 -11.30am

A list of foodstuffs is on the noticeboard at the back  
of church and on the Sunday pew sheet.

## FLAG NEWS



December is a flag flying free month.

20th January – Birthday of HRH The Duchess of  
Edinburgh – Union Flag

26th January - Australian Day – Australia Flag (if  
we had one!!)

If any parishioner would like to make a donation of  
a flag please give me a call.

**Tim Cadel  
Flagman  
07768 793997**

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necessarily those of the Editor or Sub Editor.  
No responsibility can be taken for advertising  
statements published**





*Rosemary & Poppies for Remembrance*



*Olive branches & Doves for Peace*



*Crowns for the Feast of Christ the King*

## **Crib Service**



Any children who wish to take part in the Nativity service at 4.00pm on Christmas Eve are invited to turn up about 20 minutes before the start and we will find you a part. We particularly need angels, shepherds, wise men and animals for the stable. We have plenty of costumes, but you could bring your own if you like!

Come and help us tell the story of Jesus' birth. Much more fun than just sitting and watching!

No practice is necessary if you want come on the day, but you are also welcome to our rehearsal in church during the 10.00am service on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> December

## **Congratulations! Canonized did you say??!!**

*Fr Darren has been offered, and has accepted, an Honorary Canonry of Christ Church Cathedral. Bishop Steven says, "this is in recognition of Fr Darren's distinguished service to the Church in this Diocese"*

*Fr Darren will be installed at Evensong on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024 at 6pm in the Cathedral. As the title "Canon" is not used with a Christian name alone, he will still be Fr Darren!*

## CHURCH GARDEN



'Oh tidings of comfort and joy,  
Comfort and Joy,  
Oh tidings of comfort and joy'

I feel that the words 'comfort' and 'joy' are the two that sum up my feelings at Christmas.

Sir William Osler (seen above), Professor of Medicine at Oxford University, and after whom Osler Road was named (and also, for those with long Headington memories, the Osler Hospital which was on the site of the John Radcliffe Hospital) stated that the duties of a doctor were to 'Cure sometimes, to relieve often and to comfort always'. So the idea of 'comfort' has been instilled in me from the time I entered Medical School. Plus, of course the fact, that my Granny used to make us laugh when she told us how when she used to go carol singing in the village they always sang 'God rest you merry gentlemen' outside the pub and hoped to get a good few pennies! Perhaps our Choir might like to do a rendition at the Tree lighting?! I hope that St Andrews Churchyard garden can, in its small way bring comfort to those who visit, perhaps coming to visit a memorial, to remember a happy event like a wedding or simply to enjoy the quietness, peace and beauty of the place.

But what about 'Joy'? The Christmas Tree lighting ceremony is a highlight of the year. It's a time when the sound of carols and readings can be heard by all. It's fun! Children warmly wrapped up with scarves and gloves, maybe a mince pie, some mulled wine, accompanied by adults and some four legged friends all woofing their approval. It reminds me of the Christmas Eve street scene with Bob Cratchit and Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens's 'A Christmas Carol'. This is 'Joy', and a wonderful start to Christmas celebrations. It's a time when St Andrews congregation go out of the Church and stand shoulder by shoulder with those who may never or rarely cross the threshold. Definitely a time to bring 'Tidings of comfort and joy'.

As I write this, I am preparing for the installation of our stable, complete with real hay, and our Nativity figures and sheep which Young Church will be helping to make over the next few Sundays. In keeping with our efforts to combat climate change, this is a totally recycled project. All sorts of materials have been used that otherwise would have been destined for landfill or other recycling. Old clothes, old duvets, pillows and waste wood have all been used. So do come and enjoy and maybe find some young ones who might like to feed the sheep with hay!

There was a recent meeting of 'Churches Together' where we all shared our ideas about what we could do to make sure that we 'do our bit', and face up to the reality of Climate change. Each of us as individuals and within larger organizations have the ability to make a difference. St Andrew's would like to explore ways to improve our carbon footprint and join the Eco Church movement. This takes effort on all sides. Through 'Young Church' and 'Young Church Garden' we are teaching the children about the natural world and how they can live side by side with nature in a sustainable way. I also hope that all of you who read my contributions can reflect on the small changes you can make to care for creation. December is quiet time as far as the plants are concerned. The leaves are all down and laying a warm blanket over the earth. The only part of my garden that I clear the leaves from is the grass (no longer can I describe it as 'lawn!') and hard surfaces. The three plants I love most this month are the winter honeysuckle, Christmas box and Helleborus niger (Christmas rose). Both the honeysuckle and box are highly fragrant, and well worth planting precisely because of their strong perfume.

Very soon the tiny green tips of the snowdrops will poke through the sometimes hard and frozen earth. Another thing to be joyful about. Last year was a tough one for our gardens. A July heatwave and drought, together with a hosepipe ban, left many plants stressed and in poor condition when the freezing conditions of December hit. I am pleased and relieved that the recently planted roses and hydrangeas not just survived but performed well this summer.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and Comfort and Joy

Happy Gardening!

**Jane Shepherd**  
[jane.shepherd1955@gmail.com](mailto:jane.shepherd1955@gmail.com)



## Notes from the Organ Bench



It seems that for the past few months, my notes have been recounting my travels. These notes are no exception. However, these will lead us neatly to Epiphany.



In August 1990 I was lucky enough to be able to take my family to Egypt. We started the holiday in Cairo in a hotel that was a short walk from the Cairo museum where we were able to marvel at the treasures of Tutankhamun. Although I was teaching in Westminster when the treasures were in London in 1972, I had never seen them before. I was amazed at the beauty of what was on display and the skill of the craftsmen who made the artefacts but I was also deeply concerned by the conditions in which they were displayed. Air conditioning appeared to be nothing more than opening a window to allow the dusty, hot air of modern Cairo to waft all over the antiquities.



From Cairo we flew to Luxor from where we were able to visit the temples of Karnak and Luxor, the valleys of the kings and of the queens, Queen Hatshepsut's temple and to take a day trip to Abu Simbel where the ancient temples which were built in the 13 century BC by Pharaoh Ramesses II were moved to higher ground in 1968 so as not to be submerged under Lake Nasser once the Aswan dam was completed. The axis of the temple was originally positioned by the ancient Egyptian architects in such a way that on October 21 and February 21, the rays of the sun would penetrate into the sanctuary and illuminate the sculptures on the back wall. These dates were the king's birthday and coronation day, respectively. However, when the temples were moved, the modern architects and engineers were unable to replicate the accuracy if there Egyptian forebears and the sun's rays now reach the back wall of the sanctuary one day late.



My long standing travelling companion (an old school friend) and his wife had never been to Egypt and so it was that this Autumn I returned and was able to see once again the wonders of this ancient civilisation. There were some magical moments. Our guide had arranged for us to visit the tombs of Ramesses 5 & 6 and the adjacent tomb of Tutankhamun privately. Normally, the tombs are very crowded but to be able to be in that sacred space and to view the splendid wall paintings and hieroglyphs without other people being 'in the way' made getting up extremely early, worthwhile.

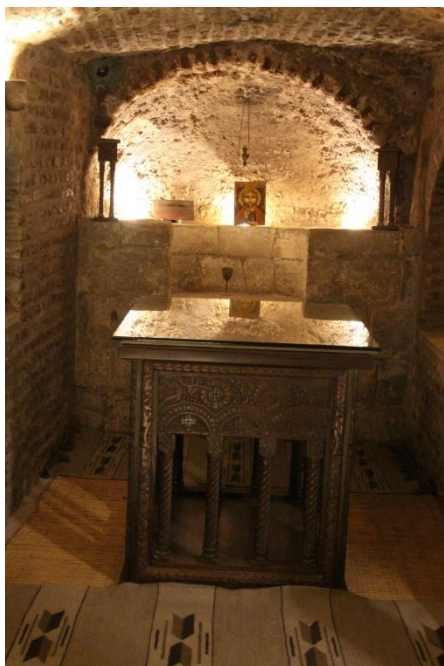




We visited many of the sites that I had visited 30 years ago but also some sites that were new to me. However, it was not the wonder of the sites that I most remember of the trip, it was our guide who, although a Muslim and not a Coptic Christian, took the trouble to relate the stories from the Bible, both old and new testament, to the actual locations where the events are supposed to have happened.

So I discovered that it was a Middle Kingdom pharaoh, Pharaoh Sesostri I who ruled from 1971 BC to 1926 BC who was famous in Biblical history for being the Pharaoh whom appointed Joseph over Egypt. Pharaoh Sesostri I not only granted Joseph much power during his reign but it is believed that he was the pharaoh who started the construction of the Temple at Karnak.

It was from a New Kingdom Pharaoh, Pharaoh Akhenaten (1353–1349 BC) that Moses guided the Israelites out of Egypt on their way to the Promised Land.



And when, after Epiphany, we come to read in Matthew's Gospel (2.13-23) of an angel appearing to Joseph in a dream telling him to flee to Egypt with Mary and the infant Jesus since King Herod would seek the child to kill him, I shall remember visiting the underground cave, under Saint Sergius church, in 'Old Cairo' (Misr el Kadima), where the Holy Family was hidden. Suddenly, it will all become so much more real.

My best wishes to you all for a very Happy Christmas and a healthy 2024.

***Richard Bennett***

## Tea on Monday



## & Knit and Natter

We are a friendly community group which meets in the church room for tea and cake every other Monday, apart from bank holidays. We meet between 3.00 and 4.30 pm and the upcoming dates are 4th, 18th December and 8th, 22nd January 2024.

We welcome all levels of knitters and crocheters, but all crafts are welcome – it is lovely to see ongoing projects. Some of the members of the group have been working on producing gifts for the St Andrew's Boat including hats, scarfs and mittens.



Non-knitters are also welcome to come along for a chat and to meet others in a relaxed atmosphere – we have plenty of toys to keep young ones amused.



Thank you to everyone who supports the group and especially to Souad and Bachir from La Croissanterie for their kind donation which is gratefully received towards new wool, needles and knitting/crochet books to inspire us. Tea on Monday is for everyone, please feel free to come along and see what goes on!

**Helen & Natacha**

## Friends of Saint Andrew's Church

### The Village Christmas Concert of Carols & Readings

**Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> December  
6pm**



**Followed by mulled wine and mince pies**

**Tickets £5 for adults (on the door)  
Children free**



### SPECIAL OCCASION CARDS & PRAYER CARDS

We have a collection of beautiful greeting cards with an inspirational verse designed by Just Cards Direct.

The greeting cards are in the Bookstall to the right of the main door as you enter church. Just Cards Direct work in partnership with projects in Rwanda, South Africa and Kenya and give the majority of their profits to Christian charities.

We also have a stand with prayer cards at the back of church.

## January Calendar

1	M	The Naming and Circumcision of Jesus		
		Eucharist		9.30am
2	T	Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus		none
3	W	Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
4	Th	Eucharist		7pm
5	F			none
6	S			none
7	Sun	<b>1st SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY</b>		
			BCP	<b>8.00am</b>
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		<b>10.00am</b>
8	M	Eucharist		9.30am
		Knit & Natter at Tea on Monday		3.00pm
9	T			none
10	W	Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
11	Th	Little Fishes play group		9.30am
		Eucharist		7pm
12	F	Aelred of Hexham		none
13	S	Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers		none
14	Sun	<b>2nd SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY</b>		
			BCP	<b>8.00am</b>
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		<b>10.00am</b>
15	M	Eucharist		9.30am
16	T			none
17	W	Anthony of Egypt, Abbot		
		Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
18	Th	Little Fishes play group		9.30am
		Eucharist		7pm
19	F	Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester		none
20	S			none
21	Sun	<b>3rd SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY</b>		
			BCP	<b>8.00am</b>
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		<b>10.00am</b>
22	M	Knit & Natter at Tea on Monday		3.00pm
		Eucharist		9.30am
		PCC Meeting		7.00pm
23	T			none
24	W	Francis de Sales, Bishop of Geneva		
		Eucharist	BCP	10.00am
25	Th	The Conversion of Paul		
		Little Fishes play group		9.30am
		Eucharist		7pm
26	F	Timothy and Titus		none
27	S			none
28	Sun	<b>4th SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY</b>		
			BCP	<b>8.00am</b>
		<b>Parish Eucharist</b>		<b>10.00am</b>
29	M	Eucharist		9.30am
30	T	Charles, King and Martyr		none
31	W	Eucharist	BCP	10.00am



## ***Churches Together in Headington***

### **Facing the horror of climate change with the joy of Creation**



On 14th November St Andrew's was delighted to welcome representatives from many of the 15 churches who unite as Churches Together in Headington (CTiH). We began the evening in church by praying together, reflecting with the aid of music and listening to one another's experiences and hopes. It was encouraging to hear about projects already underway and fascinating to hear how our common yearning to respond to the goodness of God's creation is expressed differently in our many Christian traditions. There are too many tales of good news to report fully here, but highlights included:

- Lime Walk Methodist Church have achieved the Arocha Eco-church bronze award, which has included a survey for the building, twinning of the church toilets, a renewal of the fair trade movement, and a commitment to include the creation and climate crisis in worship, particularly through confession and intercession.
- Collingwood Road URC have improved their building with double glazing and are now considering future church heating from an ecological as well as an economical perspective. There is a hunger in their Bible study group to grapple with the moral and spiritual issues of our time, including the climate challenge and conflict in the Holy Land.
- Headington Baptist Church have investigated planting, solar panels and rainwater adaptations of their building but have concluded their focus needs to be congregational projects instead.

- Holy Trinity, Headington Quarry, have just received the Silver eco-Church award, which has taken them beyond building stewardship to shared conversations about our individual and household impact on the Earth. It has resulted not only in practical changes but a closer community and deeper shared faith.

- St Andrew's have integrated love and care for their churchyard with their Young Church. (Sunday school.) It has been a joy to see the children getting their hands dirty, exploring nature and tending a small garden, which is also a challenge to older generations who are currently stewards both of the Church and the Earth.

- The Headington Quaker Meeting is building-free as an institution, but have been greatly concerned about household impact for a long time and have dug into the resources of their tradition, including an essay from John Woolman, in the 1772 "Red Book," which speaks of intergenerational justice and the care of creation being central to moral and spiritual life. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun!

- Corpus Christi have been influenced by Pope Francis's letter "Laudato si" (2015) and the "shorter, more desperate," Laudate Deum issued last month with urgency. The Live Simply Award has been a healthy challenge but also raised questions about the lack of choices and power for the economically disadvantaged to make changes in a consumer society which is based on convenience and efficiency.

Maranda St John Nicolle of Christian Concern for One World, kindly joined us to reflect on our experiences and encourage us to continue talking, walking and praying together. She remarked that we already had made significant connections between local and global communities, as well as engaging with use of our buildings, stewardship of our land and authentically Christian worship and teaching that acknowledges the gifts and challenges we have. She told us that collaborative projects work well when you start with what you already have and build sustainably, and that we already have a great deal of treasure!

There was much talk and excitement over coffee and biscuits, followed by an open discussion about possible future projects. These might include information sharing, collaboration and prayer as each church renews and develops its own response to creation but we are keen to explore joint outreach projects in our local community. We agreed to meet again at St Andrew's at 7 pm on Tuesday 23rd January, 2024.



All member churches are encouraged to bring specific proposals to present to one another, building on our existing church resources but calling us to step out into the kingdom of God. Please do come along to listen, discuss and encourage - people who have not previously been involved in CTIH are especially welcome to join us in this practical and spiritual journey. If you have a proposal, please send an outline of not more than 150 words to Fr Luke by 14th January for inclusion in the program. Each proposal will have a three minute pitch and five minutes for discussion, Dragon's Den style!

**Fr Luke**

## **1st Responders - Looking after us in church**



Have you ever noticed in the pew sheets, that on the first page there are 2 names (changing each week) letting us all know who are the 1st responders at the 10am service?

The role of 1st responders is to keep a 'weather eye' on everyone present, and to try and notice if something isn't quite right. Maybe someone is coughing a lot and needs a glass of water, or if someone suddenly sits down unexpectedly and bows over (are they feeling faint?), or someone rushes out of the church (they might be unwell or upset). 1st responders will be by the person's side, just asking if they're OK or need something, and will stay with the person to support and help them for as long as needed. A caring arm and a helping hand for those in need. This is what we aim to do. We also have a plan if something of a more serious nature / illness occurs in church, so that we all know the role we have. The intention is to be efficient in seeking external aid, and to ensure the whole congregation knows that something is being done to help.

A well-oiled mechanism – It's the hope anyway! We do need more people to volunteer to be a 1st responder. Could it be you?

It's not an arduous task. You do not need any special skills, just a caring heart.

You would be asked to attend a low-key, friendly, informal 'training' / discussion/ refresher session of about 1 ½ - 2 hours – see dates below.

You would be on the rota about every 6-8 weeks, with negotiated 'duty' dates to accommodate holidays and your other commitments.

You needn't worry about being on your own, or not 'doing things right' - you'd always have support when you were on 'duty' anyway, as there are enough of the team in church at the same time; it's just useful to have 2 people named as 'leading' on the day. The clergy and several servers, as well as the two church wardens are also 'trained' and come along to the refresher / training sessions so that they know what the plan is too!

If you'd like to find out a bit more – please ask Jenny Butler-Ferris in church on a Sunday, or the church wardens, or the clergy... all can help explain. Or email [jennybutlerferris2@gmail.com](mailto:jennybutlerferris2@gmail.com) and I'll try and answer any queries you may have.

I look forward to you joining the friendly, kindly team.

**Jenny Butler-Ferris**

Training dates 2024 –

Saturday 3rd February 10.30 – 12.30

Tuesday 13th February 10.30 – 12.30

Tuesday 20th February 10.30 – 12.30

More dates may be added, as required.

## **January Readings**

### **7<sup>th</sup> January**

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### **Feast of the Epiphany**

Isaiah 60.1-6

72

Ephesians 3.1-12

Matthew 2.1-12

### **14<sup>th</sup> January**

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### **Epiphany 2**

1 Samuel 3.1-10

139.1-9

Revelation 5: 1-10

John 1.43-end

### **21<sup>st</sup> January**

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### **Epiphany 3**

Genesis 14.17-20

128

Revelation 19.6-10

John 2.1-11

### **28<sup>th</sup> January**

Old Testament

Psalm

New Testament

Gospel

### **Feast of Candlemas**

Malachi 3.1-5

24.7-10

Hebrews 2.14-end

Luke 2.22-40

## JANUARY MISSION OF THE MONTH



Caring for seafarers  
around the world

The Mission of Seafarers contribute to the physical & mental welfare of approximately 1.5 million seamen & women who work on the sea in difficult & often dangerous conditions. This support was especially important during the pandemic when personnel on ships have found themselves isolated aboard their vessels unable to go ashore or return to their home ports. As of Autumn 2023, this work is ongoing as the reported after-effects of the pandemic produced by social isolation, restrictions on travel, & the loss of life opportunities & interactions continue to emerge.

The Mission focus is to compensate for the lack of facilities available, & for the physical & mental well-being of the sea-personnel caught in these unresolved situations.



*Port of Bristol seafarer's centre*

The Mission to Seafarers is a global presence in over 200 ports with chaplains offering support & counselling from 150 centres with help ranging from financial & religious guidance to legal & social resources.

Although the nearest mission centres are at Avonmouth (Bristol) & Southampton there are 21 mission ports in total throughout the UK, with the HQ in London. Their local reach is also augmented by online chaplaincy & other services.

The charity run a number of campaigns to raise awareness & support including Sea-Sunday which is observed by a number of churches in the Oxford Diocese. These commemorate seafarers & the difficult & dangerous work they undertake to convey up to 90% of the things we need.

Sea-Sunday can be commemorated any Sunday of the year & for more information please contact the Mission to Seafarers [www.missiontoseafarers.org](http://www.missiontoseafarers.org)

During January 2023 St Andrew's Knit & Natter group made four hat & glove sets, four hats & a hat & scarf set & these were sent to The Mission to Seafarers at South Shields for distribution.



*Happy recipients of knitwear at one of the centres*

Dianne Erskine, Port Welfare officer for the branch acknowledged receipt of the gifts & the hard work, patience & kindness shown in their production. The knitwear would be collated with other similar gifts received & distributed to their UK & European centres, who in turn would take them to crews visiting the ports.



*St Andrew's Church Knit & Natter donation*

Seafarers always appreciate these gifts, & are very thankful for the generosity demonstrated by the kindness & thoughtfulness of the donors it represents.

The Patron of The Mission to Seafarers is HRH The Princess Royal.

**Malcolm Nichols**

## BUILDING UP FAITH....

I know Advent is only just starting, the season of looking ahead, but already it's time to look ahead further to the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) Notes for the months January to April. The secular world imagines that Christmas starts with Advent (if not Hallowe'en!) and finishes on Boxing Day when it can be packed away. In truth, for the Church it only starts on Christmas Day and runs on to Candlemas. Boxing Day itself in the Christian calendar is the Feast of Stephen, as we sing in the Carol 'Good King Wenceslas', and it's to Stephen that the January Notes devote their first week. Not only was he the first Christian martyr but in just two chapters of Acts he stands out, a model of Christian discipleship: picked by the twelve apostles as of "good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom", he was trusted to see that widows were properly fed each day. But then, always ready to speak up for his faith, he was dragged before the council and stoned. Stephen challenges our resolution at New Year. How willing are we to speak up for our faith, and how equipped do we feel? It's seldom comfortable in modern society, nor was it then, but BRF's Daily Notes are geared to prompting thoughts which help us.

After Stephen, two weeks of biblical reflections on Winter teach us the role of the seasons to serve God's purposes – hardly could this be more relevant as their rhythm seems increasingly disturbed. What should we make of the necessity of winter? It's an illustration one of Job's so-called comforters uses to try to put his suffering in perspective. Might it be any use when you are trying to comfort someone facing terrible suffering?

Next the Notes give us a week with the prophet Haggai's book, itself is a story of new leaves turning over. Israelites returning from captivity in Babylon had laid the foundations to rebuild Jerusalem's destroyed temple, but then got stuck. Years went by but, with a new king in Babylon, the Israelites gained the heart to resume building.

Then Liz Hoare, who teaches prayer and spirituality in Oxford, explores St John's gospel 5-7, chapters rich with incident as Jesus sets about his ministry of healing and teaching but rich also with reflection by aged John, after his decades pondering the deeper meanings of what Jesus did and said. Here we find those themes of the Bread of Life and also the Living Water, together with the paralysed man, the crowd on the seashore, and eminent Nicodemus who'd consulted Jesus under cover of darkness,

now getting courage to speak up before the authorities. We so often reduce baptism to a conventional rite of passage: shouldn't we rather think of ourselves as thereafter standing in that Living Water which ever flows around us to cleanse, refresh and renew?

I Samuel 1-12 takes us from a young woman, taunted for being childless, to the dedication of her child in God's service, and King Saul's emergence to lead the nation's defence against attacking Philistines. Of course it's not so simple: both king and nation must find the values which give true security. Then Canon Sally Welch of Christ Church and Emma Pennington, lately Rector of Garsington and now Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, in turn take us through themes of Reconciliation (as we go through Lent) and then Paul's first letter to Timothy, his trusted companion and emissary to the wealthy and complex city of Ephesus, Asia Minor's crossroads of trade and pilgrimage where cultures and faiths co-existed or competed. Paul guides Timothy in response to so much difference while holding fast to Christ.

From Passion Sunday, Canon Riem of Winchester follows St Mathew's gospel account, digging deeper into its parables, both those spoken by Jesus and those acted by participants. The entry on the donkey, the Passover cup, Pilate's handwashing, torn robes and curtain, sour wine on the sponge, each has a significance beyond the outward sign.

Then from Easter Day we are led into the Resurrection stories in Matthew, Mark and Luke, contrasting surprise, shock and disbelief alongside wonder, celebration and overflowing joy. How will we place ourselves in those scenes, with our own questions, doubts and concerns? With whom will we identify, and what surprises may we meet?

As we keep the 40 days of Easter, our journey next goes to the last part of I Corinthians; earlier it's told of Paul's wrestling with that early Church, their confusions and struggles, but now he takes them to the mountaintop, sharing the mystery and wonder of Resurrection faith, then to bring them gently down to the everyday work of a community following Christ's Way.

For the last two weeks we follow the Jordan river, as it flows through the pages of the Bible and through the long story of salvation. Rivers have never been more vital. They may dry up, burst banks, or change course. Plants and fish like people need Life-giving Water. Dwindling water may lead to conflict or migration, or can we learn to share? "When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside".

**Nicholas Coulton**  
[ngc@proscenia.co.uk](mailto:ngc@proscenia.co.uk)



## What do you know about Christmas Carols?

If you've ever wondered when Christmas carols first came about, the answer lies in the 14th century – although their evolution dates back even further. Even before Christianity, it is thought that midwinter songs existed to keep up people's spirits, along with dances, plays and feasts.

Christianity spread across Europe from the fourth to the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, and the first carols were produced by Franciscan friars. These took the form of a dance in a circle with linked hands and everybody singing the song. Huge numbers of Christmas carols survive from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, making it the best-preserved aspect of English medieval music.

Professor Ronald Hutton (Bristol University) believes that the dances associated with early carols died out as 'people just got bored with it'. For a period, carols could be attached to any season, so there were May carols and harvest carols. But Hutton says that, as Christmas is the time for festivity, Christmas carols survived where carols linked to other parts of the year died out.

England's oldest surviving carol, says Hutton, depends on how you define it. 'If you go for the component parts, I think it's "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night", which has a 16th-century tune and 17th-century words. On the other hand, they're not put together securely until the 19th century. So if you're going for the oldest carol that's still popular, which is complete, it's probably "O Come All Ye Faithful", both the tune and the words of which seem to be securely put together by the end of the 18th century.'

Not every well-known carol has English roots. In particular, 'Away in a Manger' first appeared in a number of American magazines in the 1880s. Intriguingly, the anonymous donor who sent it to them claimed it was a 16th-century German lullaby – but Hutton is not convinced.

The anonymous donor credited it to Martin Luther, the great German reformer,' he says. 'Experts in Luther are convinced this cannot be possible. So it's almost certainly a fake in that sense, written by clearly quite a brilliant American in the late 19th century who chose to conceal her or his identity. It is the tenderest of all our carols. And it was called "Luther's Cradle Song" for decades, when people were still believing in the original story.'

Another carol that has gone through various iterations over the years is 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'. The lyric was originally written by Charles

Wesley (1707–88) who, with his brother John, founded the Christian denomination of Methodism.

'The original first two lines are, "Hark how all the welkin rings, Glorious the king of kings." And quite obviously, this is pretty obscure,' says Hutton. 'Even in the early 18th century, "welkin" was a rather old-fashioned way of saying heaven or sky. And so quietly and tactfully, the Methodist preacher George Whitefield tidied the thing up and, in 1754, added the two opening lines that have remained ever since.'

However, the carol didn't get the tune we know today until the composer Felix Mendelssohn wrote it in 1840. More recently, a descant (an independent treble melody sung above the main tune) was added in the 1960s.

But the carol with the most complicated history is 'O Come All Ye Faithful'. It can be traced back to a Latin version, 'Adeste Fideles', which is known to have existed as far back as 1640 – and may go back even further. According to Hutton, there are a whole range of candidates to whom the lyrics could be attributed.

'The most exciting is the musical king of Portugal in the mid-17th century, John IV. But there's also a whole range of Cistercian monks and English composers who might have been the authors. We just don't know.' Further complicating matters is that the standard version we now use was put together by John Francis Wade (1711–86), a Jacobite. 'He was a supporter of the exiled Stuart royal family,' says Hutton. 'And a lot of people have thought there's a subversive, hidden message in the lyrics, rallying support for Bonnie Prince Charlie and his family. There's no absolute proof. It's there if you want to see it. It's a conspiracy theory – and sometimes those are correct.'

Whatever the true meaning of the words, Hutton maintains that the song remains so well-liked because the lyrics and the tune we know today 'are just so jolly'. It's also the song that carol services normally end with 'because you go out with a bang with "O Come All Ye Faithful". It's been translated into lots of languages. It is so compellingly convivial that it can reach all parts of the human race and all denominations.'

And that perhaps explains the enduring popularity of carols. Whether they were created by Franciscan friars in the 14th century or a mysterious American in the late 19th century, they are so inextricably festive that they still capture our collective imagination today – a heartening, seasonal link between past and present.

