

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 2025 / January 2026

£1

Inside:

Hope, peace, joy & love

The themes of Advent
adorn a whole forest of
trees at the Tree Festival

Plus

Baubles for Birds:
dress a tree for wildlife

Advent:

Fr. Bernard says
it's a good time to listen to
the whispers

Music all around us

- * For young people
in All Saints
- * Young Singers learn to
play handbells
- * Brass bands and
wind quintets at
the Tree Festival
- * The choir went to
Jesus College, Cambridge

"Living God's Love"

Closing the series,
Bill Webb suggests that
we be sent out as
Heralds of Good News



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Watch and listen –

use Advent to concentrate on “now”

By Rev'd Dr Bernard Minton



We have reached that time in the Christian year when clergy up and down the land complain that Advent has been engulfed!

Advent is supposed to be a season of thoughtful preparation and contemplation, when we think sombrely in crisp dark evenings about sin, death and judgement, preparing to meet our Maker as the cries of St John the Baptist echo in our ears. But Advent has been completely drowned out: by Christmas at one end, where cute baby Jesus meek and mild is surrounded by carols and pretty presents, warming even the most Scrooge-like of hearts; while at the other end, Hallowe'en and bonfires give everyone the opportunity for a different kind of fun, as people scare themselves silly with ghost stories in the dark, before gorging on sweets and letting off fireworks to scare the devils and indigestion away. The stillness and silence of Advent, with that slowly building sense of expectation and waiting, vanishes under the intensity of Hallowe'en thrills and Christmass joy.

Of course, this doesn't actually matter much. It's good to give clergy an opportunity to get grumpy *before* instead of *during* the Crib Service, before 'Away in a manger' gets too firmly embedded between the ears! The world won't end sooner if no-one sings 'O Come, O come, Emmanuel', the 'Matin Responsory', or 'Wake, O wake, with tidings thrilling' (though they happen to be my favourite pieces of choral liturgy). Advent doesn't really matter in the way that Lent does, or Easter. We could go straight from All Saints' to Christmass, without missing anything vital.

But we do miss something, all the same. Advent is about paying attention to where we are NOW, not where we could be, or want to be, or are afraid we might be. Advent is about recognising that something is going on NOW, at an incredibly deep level of creation, far below our normal senses. A buried seed is slowly sprouting; the tide is on the turn and the wind is changing, though we can't see these things as we wait on the beach in the dark. Something is building, imperceptibly slowly, that will transform both us and the world.

To see it we need to stop, look, and concentrate. We need to attend to the world beneath us, and examine our own hearts. Are we ready for what is coming? Can we feel it in the air? Will He break us when He arrives, or fulfil our deepest longings, making us burst with God?

Advent whispers, 'Listen carefully. Watch patiently. The dawn is about to break. This night is about to end. Get ready to live in the light. Get ready to see and be seen.' Maranatha; come Lord Jesus.

Fr. Bernard

Our present pattern of services across the Ouzel Valley Team

All Saints

Sundays:

8.00am 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

6.00pm 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

10.00am Thursday

9.00am Saturday

(Service of Healing on 4th Saturday each month)

Morning Prayer:

9.00am Tuesday – Friday in the Chancel

St. Barnabas, Linslade

Sundays:

8.00am Said Eucharist

10.00am Parish Eucharist

6.00pm Evensong

www.stbarnabaslinslade.uk

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: 'Chapel Time':

Lead reflection and discussion

3rd Sunday: Holy Communion & CGS Juniors

4th Sunday: 'Morning Break':

Informal service with sermon and discussion.

Free pop-up café every Sunday from 9.45am

*Community Cafe every Wednesday at Astral Park
10am - 12noon with a Music, Rhythm and Rhyme
session from 10am - 10:30am.*

St. Leonard's, Heath & Reach

Sundays:

8.00am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

11.00am Holy Communion

1st Sundays: Family Service

Tuesdays: 7.00pm Holy Communion

Morning Prayer via Zoom:

9.00am Monday – Saturday

www.saintleonardschurch.com

St. Michael's, Eggington

9.30am 1st & 3rd Sundays: Holy Communion

4th Sundays: Café Church 3-4pm

St. Nicholas', Hockliffe

9.30am 2nd Sundays: Family Communion

4th Sundays: Holy Communion

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.

£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, 6.30pm Trebles; 7.30 – 8.30pm Full choir.

Bellringers: Practice on Monday, 7.30 - 9.30pm.

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

Saturday 10am - 12noon for drinks & cakes only.

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, hopefully, 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 2026!



Seasonal smiles

The nativity play was going as planned and Joseph and Mary were going from 'house' to 'house' knocking on the doors and asking if there was any room for them. As they continued to get 'no room' answers, a little voice called from the back of the church: "You should have booked!"



At Sunday school, the younger children were drawing pictures to illustrate a biblical story. The teacher was startled to see one little boy was drawing an aeroplane. "This is the Flight into Egypt," the little boy explained. "See, here is Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus. And this," he said, pointing to the figure in the front of the plane, "is Pontius. He's the Pilot."



As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. "You can't do that," argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know. He shot me a dubious look. "So, he knows if I've been bad or good all year, but he doesn't know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?"



A man visiting his daughter and her family for Christmas was admiring the beautiful nativity set in her hallway. His young granddaughter came up to him, and he asked her if she knew what it was. "Sure I do," she replied. "It's breakable."



A young couple began to assemble a special Christmas gift they had bought for their children. They had bought a kit for a tree house, but it didn't make sense. Then they realised that the materials were for a sailboat, so they wrote to the company to complain. The company's reply was brief: "While we regret the inconvenience this mistake must have caused you, we are more concerned about the man who is out on a lake somewhere, trying to sail your tree house."

Parish Registers

Holy Baptism, October:

12: Annie Jennifer Rose McCartney, Bobby Stanley Patrick MacCartney,
Noah James Sheen, James Sheen

'One Lord, one faith, one baptism'

Funerals, October:

7: Audrey Strachan at St. Barnabas; 9: Colin Gibbs-Jones at St. Michael & All Angels;
10: Andrew Griggs at All Saints; 22: Harry Marshall at Bierton;
31: Muriel Bridgford at St. Leonard's

Funerals, November:

11: James Knott at St. Barnabas; 13: Maureen Dykes at All Saints;
27: Joseph Grice at Oakfield Gardens Crematorium;

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

Years Mind, December:

1: Tony Pyman, Nora Davis, Audrey Ingledow, Suzanne Edwards; 2: Frederick Deeley;
3: Bram Evans, Peter Wilks; 5: Peter Harmer, Gary Hargreaves;
6: Leslie Plenderleath, Charles Scraggs; 8: George Lee; 9: Derek Williamson;
10: Kathleen Meredith; 11: Brian Willett, Peter Eglesfield;
12: Edie Skevington, Edna Carpenter; 13: Daphne Washington;
14: Dorothy Scammell, Ian Macpherson; 17: Terry Spencer; 18: Simon Munford;
19: Diana Ruault; 20: Cynthia Jury, Margaret Lutt; 21: Keith Biggerstaff;
24: Marie Brooker; 25: Joan Winter, Margaret Ellison, Alice Shelley;
26: Roy Palmer; 27: Sandra Hipwell;
28: Albert Nash, Gwenda Burley; 29: David Brooker;
30: Mary Warburton, Reg Lunnon, Frederick Ottaway;
31: Edward Meredith, Nancy Meredith, Peggy Stonier

Years Mind, January:

1: Sarah Andrew; 2: Arthur Keyworth, Kay Kiteley; 4: Donald Salvage;
6: Eileen Garlick, Elizabeth Underwood, David Burley, Dennis Warwick;
7: Joyce Lathwell, John Carter; 9: Ellen Daniels;
10: Arthur Speller, Margaret (Peg) Tingey; 11: Ivy Nash;
12: Rita Shephard, Elsie Molloy, Ronald Chandler;
15: Annie Norman, Mary Dell, Dennis Holroyd; 18: Danny Munroe;
19: Dian Milne; 20: Maurice Greensted, Dolly Harmer; 22: Margaret Beck;
23: Robert Kiteley, Betty Tuck, Annie Williams, Revd. Vernon Smith, Peter Kiddle;
24: Kenneth Stratford; 26: Charlotte Sawka;
27: William Leath, Alice Pyman;
28: Russell Palmer; 29: Bill Stonier; 31: John Harris, Maureen Webb

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



What does a Governor *do*?

Someone asked me recently “what does a school governor actually do? Surely Mr. Heather manages the school”. That is a good question – and we are very fortunate that Mr Heather does indeed manage the school so well. However, school governors also play an important role in supporting and challenging the school leaders, and providing strategic guidance. I think the best analogy is that if Pulford school was a business, then Mr Heather would be the CEO and the Governing Board would be the Board of Directors. Unfortunately, the analogy ends there, as headteachers are not paid like corporate CEOs and the Board are all volunteers!

In general, the Governing Board represents the different school stakeholders – principally the parents and Local Authority. However, in the case of a Church of England Voluntary Assisted (VA) school like Pulford then the Church is also a key stakeholder, so the Diocese appoints a number of Foundation Governors on the recommendation of the PCC. I am proud to be one of these Foundation Governors, and having previously been a parent governor many years ago this provides a different perspective.

So what does a school governor actually do, and particularly a Foundation Governor? We meet regularly with the school leadership team to set and monitor the school’s long-term vision and strategy, including curriculum, teaching standards, safeguarding and financial management. When required, then we are responsible for appointing the headteacher, and holding them to account for the performance of the school. We review the school policies and ensure that they comply with statutory requirements and are consistent with the school’s Christian ethos. As Foundation Governors, we also liaise between the school and the church to support collective worship and religious education, and ensure that Christian values are embedded in school life.

VA governors have additional responsibilities compared to those in other schools. The Governing Board are the legal employers of all the school staff, and so we have more responsibility for recruitment, performance management, and disciplinary procedures. The governors are also responsible for setting and managing the school’s admissions policy, ensuring that it is fair and transparent.

So while Mr Heather and the leadership team continue to run the school very effectively, the Governing Board also play an important role as custodians of both educational excellence and spiritual integrity, working with the school to ensure that every child flourishes academically, socially, and spiritually in a nurturing environment that is rooted in Christian values.

Alan Perrott



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On a musical note.....

On Saturday 15th November, the All Saints Choir went to Jesus College Cambridge to sing Evensong along with the Chapel Choir. I was so excited for this trip as I've been to Jesus College before and I knew what an amazing space the chapel was. However, I'd always come during half term or the holidays when it was the college choir singing, so I'd never actually seen the Chapel Choir*.

It was so exciting to have both our choir and the Chapel Choir come together to sing and the sound produced was really beautiful.

Before we began rehearsing, we were kindly invited to an afternoon tea in the Prioress's Room. We first rehearsed processing as the quire layout was one we were less used to. Then, we had a longer practice with both choirs together. We were put in an alternating pattern so that the sound from both choirs would blend beautifully rather than two separate sounds. There followed another short break, during which we finished putting our robes on, then we lined up in order of procession in the cloisters ready to go in.

In the service, the introit was 'The Call' by Richard Lloyd, the responses were by Humphrey Clucas and the anthem was *Expectans Expectavi* by Charles Wood. The canticles were Stanford in C which has one of my favourite endings. We also had the pleasure of singing the Coe Fen descant - a lovely one that we don't sing so often.

This was a wonderful opportunity to sing with another excellent choir and work with a different conductor as well. I had a brilliant time and I think everyone else did too.

Rosie Howat



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* [There are 2 choirs at Jesus College: the College Choir which is adults only; and the Chapel Choir which is very like All Saints Choir, in that it has trebles on the top line, with adults on the back rows. The choirs sing 2 evensongs each a week, and do all sorts of other things as well. Unlike King's and St. John's Colleges, there is no choir school. Trebles are recruited from a wide range of local schools. Ed]

Dingbats – Christmas Edition

<p>ABCDEFGH IJKLMNOPQ RSTUVWX YZ</p> <p>1</p>	<p>Y Y MEN Y</p> <p>2</p>	<p>MISTLETOE XXX</p> <p>3</p>	<p>CHRISTMAS CHRISTMAS → CHRISTMAS</p> <p>4</p>
<p>DONKEY → DONKEY</p> <p>5</p>	<p>CE CE CE ↓ CE π π</p> <p>6</p>	<p>MANAWAYGER</p> <p>7</p>	<p>LEFT TURKEY</p> <p>8</p>
<p>NIGHT</p> <p>9</p>	<p>PRES ENTS</p> <p>10</p>	<p>W ← ↑ → E S</p> <p>11</p>	<p>JACK</p> <p>12</p>
<p>XMAS</p> <p>13</p>	<p>GOOD DAY SPRING HI THERE SUMMER HEY AUTUMN HELLO WINTER</p> <p>14</p>	<p>PPP </p> <p>15</p>	<p>BLANPIGPIGKETS</p> <p>16</p>
<p>D NER</p> <p>17</p>	<p>DECOR = 8/10</p> <p>18</p>	<p>VORDERMAN DANVERS SMILLIE KING</p> <p>19</p>	<p>PRESENCE PRESENTS</p> <p>20</p>

Answers on page 19

quiz-questions.uk





**The Bedfordshire Band of
the Royal British Legion
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**"THE SNOWMAN"
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**Saturday 20 December, 2pm
All Saints Church**

For tickets visit:

**<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/FOKK>
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Tickets:

Adult: £10

Child: £5

U5s Free



**The Bedfordshire Band of the
Royal British Legion**

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Calendar of Events

3rd December & 7th January

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

Tickets £6.00 available from the Coffee Shop.



7th December

Services as usual including Messy Mass for Advent Toy Service

All Saints 11.30am

7th December & 4th January

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



13th December

Christmas Open House at The Vicarage 4pm – 6pm

Mayor's Carol Concert All Saints 7pm



14th December

Morning services as usual All Saints



Access to the church will be restricted during school carol services:

15th December: Leedon School Carol Concert All Saints 7pm

17th December: Pulford School Christmas Services All Saints 9.45am, 11am, 2.30pm

19th December: Leighton Middle Christmas Services All Saints 11am & 1.30pm

21st December

Morning services as usual including All Age Communion All Saints 11.30am

28th December

Feast of the Holy Innocents Holy Communion All Saints 9.30am

4th January

Services as usual including Messy Mass All Saints 11.30am

11th January

Epiphany Morning Services as usual All Saints



16th January

Crafty Natter All Saints 1.30pm - 3.30pm



18th January

Services as usual including All Age Communion All Saints 11.30am

All Saints Parish Church Leighton Buzzard

Sunday 30th Nov 6.00pm
Advent Sunday

Advent Carol Service
Music and readings for Advent

Sunday 7th Dec 11.30am

Toy Service and Messy Mass for Advent.
We bring new unwrapped toys.

Sunday 14th Dec 4.00pm

Christingle

Sunday 21st Dec 6.00pm

Lessons and Carols*,
followed by mulled wine and mince pies

Christmas Eve

2.00pm Nativity Service.

A short service with carols

(dressing up as a character from the story optional)

5.00pm Carols by Candlelight

11.00pm

MIDNIGHT MASS OF THE NATIVITY*

Christmas Day

8.00am Holy Communion

10.00am

CHRISTMAS FAMILY COMMUNION*

NEW YEAR'S DAY

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 11th Jan 6.00pm

EPIPHANY CAROL SERVICE*

*LIVE STREAMED



**CHRISTMAS SERVICES
2025**



on ...

The Growing Church



All Saints has the capacity to offer space and opportunity to a wealth of young musicians, helping them to grow and become the musicians of the future, contributing in orchestras, choirs, churches ... for decades to come.

There was one particular weekend at the end of September, when about 5 young organists, a young trumpeter, the choir, Young Singers ... all competed for space. The bench in the organ loft was polished to a shine as organists came in, did their thing, and slid off to make way for the next. Lindsay needed a spreadsheet and a dedicated Organ Practice Calendar Secretary.

In any given week, you will find some young organists are playing for services; others having lessons; choristers learning to sing, developing their musicianship and taking medals while the Young Singers Club explores musicianship in a more informal setting. Above all, young musicians are welcomed and given opportunities to perform.

Above right: Henni & Rosie, swatting up, checking psalm dynamics before medal tests.

At the 9.30 service, Arthur Togneri (*right*) accompanied the choir anthem, *In Paradisum* from Fauré's Requiem.

Arthur said: *"All Saints has always been amazing, giving me opportunities to play an occasional voluntary, accompany the choir, and let me to come in to practise."*

At the end of the same service, Felix (*above left*) then played the final voluntary on his trumpet. **Felix said:** *"I chose to play the Pie Jesu from Fauré's Requiem because we sang the 'In Paradisum' as the anthem that day. I felt good playing from the loft. When Preb. David was giving the blessing, I was thinking 'I have to be ready for this; it's the first time I've played like this with just me and accompaniment.' When everyone clapped at the end, it felt amazing."*



*A series looking at youth work in our churches.
This month: so much space and so many opportunities
for young musicians*



Several young organists have lessons sponsored by the Beds & Herts Organ Trust., including Alice (*top left*) and Polina (*above*).

Alice says: "Playing the organ brings joy to my soul – a single organist alone can produce the sound of a full orchestra."

Elisha (*above centre*) has a lesson before taking her Silver Medal; and Issy (*top right*) plays in the All Age Band.

Young Singers (*above left and left*) don't just sing. They are now learning to play hand bells for the Town Mayor's Carol Concert.

Julia Dickens



The 2025 Tree Festival



brought hope, peace, joy & love to hundreds of visitors

Over the weekend of 21st – 23rd November, All Saints hosted the Tree Festival. This year we had an amazing 87 trees and displays adorning every corner of the church, with some fantastic interpretations on the theme of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love – the four central themes of the season of Advent.

The Festival was officially opened by HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, Mrs. Susan Lousada together with Town Mayor Cllr David Bligh followed by some beautiful singing from the children of Pulford School.



So many trees, so many colours, so many shapes and sizes, all laden with so many baubles and decorations. The astonishing thing is that every single one will have been thought about, carefully designed and placed with a particular message in mind.

That is truly a LOT of thinking!



A number of musical performances were enjoyed by the hundreds of visitors who soaked up the atmosphere and got into the Christmas spirit.

Above left: the British Legion are great musicians.

Greensand Community Energy Champions are here to help: with a tree made of wooden blocks.

Leighton in Bloom bring colour even on a dark winter's day.

Above is Joy – a tree who loved singing so much that she put on some robes and joined the choir.

The event closed with a Special Service of Thanksgiving led by Preb. David.

Our thanks go to everyone who helped make the Festival a success, by organising, volunteering, exhibiting and visiting. Also, to our wonderful Coffee Shop managers and volunteers who stayed open throughout the weekend.

Jo Waller



Good Shepherd, Sandhills

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Stuart Blofeld; Katharine Reedy



**CHURCH of the
GOOD SHEPHERD**

Christmas events in and around CGS

Our thoughts are turning towards Christmas and at CGS we are excited about the many opportunities this time of year offers to engage with our community.

Here are some of our main events, to which all are welcome, plus Sunday mornings of course:

- ☀ Sunday 30th November 3:30pm:
Carol Singing at Greenfields Retirement Development
- ☀ Saturday 6th December 3pm
Carol Singing on the Green at Astral Park, together with other churches
- ☀ Sunday 7th December 5:30pm,
Christingle for adults with learning disabilities at Astral Park Community Centre
- ☀ Thursday 11th December 3pm,
Cake and Carols at Norton Court
- ☀ Saturday 13th December 5:30pm,
Family Carols at Astral Park Community Centre
- ☀ Wednesday 24th December 11:15pm:
Midnight Mass at St Michael and All Angels, Billington
- ☀ Thursday 25th December 9:45am:
Christmas Day service at Astral Park Community Centre.



LEIGHTON BUZZARD MUSIC

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Saturday 31st January 2026 at 7.30pm

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WINNIE SU

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or in person from the Box Office, Tuesdays. Thursdays & Fridays 10am - 12pm or at the door.

Leighton Buzzard Music is a registered charity no: 1183681



St. Nicholas, Hockliffe

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

There are no churchwardens at present.

For all information, please contact the vicar.



The clocks have gone back, and the nights are drawing in. There is a feeling that like the animals, we should be hibernating too. Getting out into the garden for some fresh air helps and meeting up with all our friends and family that we haven't seen for a long while is rewarding.

As Christians though we are looking forward to Advent and Christmas, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus, to parents Mary and Joseph. The advent ring is placed in Church ready to be lit up for the four weeks before Christmas, with the last one being lit on Christmas Day.

Our first event is a favourite with everyone who continue to come year after year. The Saint Nicholas Supper, which is on Saturday 6th December (with live music) starting at 7.30 p.m. is an evening, not to be missed. We thank Paul and Julia for the use of their beautiful home, which gives many of us, a feeling of anticipation, for the start of the Christmas celebrations. If you would like to join us, please phone Julia Dickens on 01525 210210 for tickets.

The ever-popular Carol Service will be on Saturday 20th December starting at 7 p.m. with wine and mince pies to enjoy!

Please note there will be no Midnight Mass this year at St. Nicholas.

We wish everyone a happy Christmas, and a peaceful New Year.

Carol Speller.

St. Nick's Supper 6th December at 7.30pm at Hockliffe Grange

Tickets £15 in aid of St. Nicholas Church, Hockliffe
Include supper, wine, music and good company.
Booking essential - please contact Julia Dickens
juliaedickens@gmail.com, 07791 394284 or 01525 210210

1: Noel; 2: Three Wise Men; 3: Kisses under the Mistletoe; 4: Last Christmas; 5: Little Donkey;
6: Mince Pies; 7: Away in a Manger; 8: Leftover Turkey; 9: Holy Night; 10: Opening Presents;
11: North Pole; 12: Jack Frost; 13: White Christmas; 14: Seasons Greetings; 15: Peace on Earth;
16: Pigs in Blankets; 17: Donner; 18: Decorate; 19: Carols; 20: Presence over Presents

Ding Bat Answers from Page 10:

St. Michael & All Angels, Billington

Vicar: Rev'd Steve Marsh

Tel: 01525 838450

Churchwardens:

Julia Haviland 850380; Tina Thompson 378411



By the time you read this we will have welcomed Preb. David to Billington. He is planning to preside and preach in Church on 15th November. He was licensed as Team Rector in All Saints in October and it is his plan for the clergy to take services in the different Churches in the Team in future. It is hoped this will help to bring the team closer together which was the original intention when the Team was formed.

On 5th December people are invited to the Village Hall at 5.30pm when the Christmas Tree lights will be turned on. There will be refreshments and music to enjoy as well as getting together with friends and neighbours.

There will be the usual Carols by Candlelight Service in Church on 21st December at 6.00pm followed by mince pies and mulled wine and the first Communion of Christmas will start at 11.15pm on Christmas Eve. Everyone is welcome at both Services. Do join us to share in the non-commercial part of Christmas!

In November there was a celebration for the life of Tess Tunley who died in October. Tess had lived with her husband Dave in the village since 2021. It was a very well attended and moving event. We send our condolences to Dave and the rest of the family including the latest member, baby Grace.

Nearly a year ago the memorial wall was built beside the Garden of Rest in the Churchyard and now after a further delay the plaques recording all those who are interred there are now in place.

We have a quote to replace the dead hedge, and it is hoped this will be done before the spring to allow the new bushes to establish. I was surprised to find there are eighty bushes in the existing hedge – a lot to replace. It has been a long job but the PCC feel it has been worthwhile to do this so there is a visible memorial to those who have died.

David Thompson.



St. Michael's, Eggington

Vicar: Rev'd Noel McGeeney

Tel: 01525 237633

Church Officers:

Carol Hart 384634; Paul Brown 751861



Finding solace in sharing familiar activities, illuminated by tradition, support, and connection.

After enduring at least four heat waves and experiencing the hottest summer on record, there is a distinct pleasure in retrieving familiar and cosy winter clothing. The simple act of putting on a favourite jumper provides a comforting embrace, much like receiving a hug from a dear friend. These seasonal rituals and traditions offer a sense of stability, guiding us through the year's journey.

This year has posed significant difficulties, with the search for a new normal proving to be a considerable challenge. As Christmas approaches, the sense of overwhelm is palpable. Yet, there is solace in the predictable rhythms of festive traditions, which slowly begin to lift the spirit. Singing carols rich with evocative imagery, savouring the enticing aroma of mince pies and Christmas cake, and witnessing the excitement of grandchildren all contribute to rekindling joy. The previous year was marked by the cancellation of Christmas, overshadowed by an overwhelming sense of loss. It was only upon reflection that the comfort found in small, familiar acts became truly appreciated.

Throughout the year, the support of others has been a blessing, with friends and community members patiently encouraging progress at a manageable pace and offering gentle nudges when needed. The church community has been an invaluable source of support—not through grand gestures, but through small acts of kindness. Even the simple act of weeding the churchyard has proven to be unexpectedly healing. I am grateful for the patience shown by St Nicholas, Hockliffe, and St Michael's, Eggington.

This Christmas, there is a renewed intention to embrace traditions—wearing a Christmas jumper, singing carols, and indulging in mince pies. The realisation has dawned that it is not the activities themselves that matter most, but the sense of connection fostered with others while decorating the Christmas tree, adorning the church, or preparing festive treats together.

The festive season will be marked by playing at the **Eggington Carol Service on Wednesday, 10th December at 7pm**, introducing a new grandson to his first **Christingle service on 24th December at 3pm**, and concluding Christmas preparations with **Midnight Mass at St Michael's starting at 11.15pm**. Although this Christmas will be different and may present its own difficulties, there is now a visible path forward, illuminated by tradition, support, and connection.



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Snowdrop Garden Open Days

— possibly for the last time —
in support of the Beds & Herts Historic Churches Trust

We are pleased to share that the Bishop of St Albans' Garden will open to visitors this February, offering a much-loved chance to enjoy God's creation in its early spring beauty. This year's openings may be the last time the garden is made accessible to the public, making the occasion especially meaningful.

Thousands of snowdrops and other early bulbs will be in bloom, creating a peaceful, uplifting place to wander and reflect. All proceeds will go directly to the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust, which helps fund essential repairs to historic churches across Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire.

Bishop Richard, Acting Bishop of St Albans, writes:

"This is a lovely way to enjoy the first signs of spring while supporting an important cause. We're proud to contribute to preserving the unique heritage of our local churches."

Open Garden Dates

Abbey Gate House, Abbey Mill Lane,
St Albans AL3 4HD

- Saturday 14 February
- Sunday 15 February
- Saturday 21 February
- Sunday 22 February

Time: 2pm–4pm

Entry: £5 per adult
(all proceeds to the Trust)

All are warmly invited to visit the garden—perhaps for the final time as we are not sure if the new Bishop will continue to allow the garden to be opened to the public—enjoy its seasonal beauty and support the preservation of our cherished church buildings.

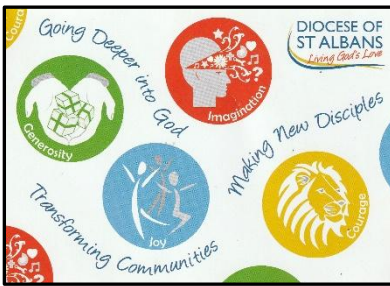
For more information, please contact:

Jane Smith, PA to the Bishop

Phone: 01727 229 073

Email: janesmith@stalbandiocese.org





Living God's Love

The final thought in this series which has explored the St. Alban's Diocese Vision Statement:

"Make us Heralds"

By Bill Webb

*Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news;
lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news;
lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)*

Before I embark upon the main theme of this article, it strikes me that we have sadly lost two of our contributors to the series during the year: Roger Collor ('The Meaning of Generosity') and Frank Reedy ('Making new Disciples'). It seems fitting that with them we were blessed to have the thoughts of one of the diocese's longest serving readers and one of the team's newest. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

In this final article of this year's exploration of the Diocesan Living God's Love prayer and Vision, I shall be considering what might we mean when we pray "*Holy Spirit, make us Heralds of Good News?*" So, what is a herald? Well, in biblical terms, a herald is an individual who, particularly in Old Testament times, proclaims or announces important news or messages, often on behalf of a king or authority. The concept of a herald is deeply rooted in the biblical narrative, serving as a vital role in the communication of divine messages and the proclamation of significant events. For instance, in the Book of Daniel, a herald is mentioned in the context of King Nebuchadnezzar's decree regarding the worship of the golden image: "*Then the herald loudly proclaimed, 'O peoples, nations, and men of every language, this is what you are commanded to do...'" (Daniel 3:4).* Here, the herald serves as the mouthpiece of the king, ensuring that the king's commands are communicated clearly and authoritatively to all subjects.

In the New Testament, the concept of a herald takes on a more spiritual dimension, often associated with the proclamation of the Gospel (from the Old English word *gōdspel*, meaning good news). John the Baptist is a quintessential example of such a herald. He is described as the one who prepares the way for the coming of Jesus Christ, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah: "*A voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for Him'" (Matthew 3:3).* John's role as a herald is to announce the imminent arrival of the Messiah and to call people to repentance.

Jesus followed John's example of being a herald. At the beginning of his Galilean ministry, some of the people implored Jesus not to leave them. However, he was adamant that he must do so: "*I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.*" (Luke 4:42-43). At the end of his post resurrection ministry, Jesus' great commission to the disciples included the command, "*Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation"* (Mark 16:15).

In this season of advent, it is impossible not to think of Charles Wesley's, and probably my favourite, Christmas hymn 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing'. This is, of course, based on Luke 2:10-11: *'But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord."'*



The Annunciation to the Shepherds, by Nicolaes Berchem 1649

As believers we are all called to be heralds of the Gospel, sharing the good news which the angels brought of Jesus Christ with all the world. As heralds of the Gospel, we Christians are called to proclaim faithfully and boldly the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ's life, death, and resurrection, which offers peace with God, new life, and eternal life to all who believe and, as Christ commanded the disciples, it is to be preached to all nations. Through God's only Son Jesus Christ a way has been made in the wilderness for His people to be with God and to be forgiven for their sins.

In Romans 10:15, in echoing Isaiah 52:7, Paul writes, *'And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"'* The phrase is not literal but signifies that the messenger is considered beautiful because of the important and hopeful message they carry, which is 'Your God reigns!' We have been sent by Christ to proclaim the Good News, but how much do we aspire to those beautiful feet?

To finish, I think that it is worth returning to where we started and reminding ourselves of the full Living God's Love prayer:

*Living God, draw us deeper into your love;
Jesus our Lord, send us to care and serve;
Holy Spirit, make us heralds of good news.
Stir us, strengthen us, teach and inspire us to live your love
with generosity and joy, imagination and courage;
for the sake of your world and in the name of Jesus, Amen*

If, as the Diocesan vision implores us, we are to go deeper into God, transform our communities and make new disciples, perhaps this is a prayer that we should be praying daily and then we might wait to see what surprises it brings.

Bill Webb, Reader, All Saints.

[The whole Living God's Love series is available on the All Saints website, www.allasaintslb.org.uk.
or from the editor, magazine@allasaintslb.org.uk]



A Green Idea for Christmas

Baubles for the Birds: decorate a tree for wildlife



Decorating an outdoor tree with healthy treats for local wildlife is a wonderful winter tradition that gives back to nature. It's a tradition that my children look forward to every winter. We often decorate a tree close to the Winter Solstice or Christmas Day but occasionally we adorn a tree in January or February when food for wildlife becomes quite scarce and winter weather harsh.

Preparing to decorate a tree for wildlife is a multi-day process in our home. We start by making homemade bird seed ornaments, then weaving popcorn-cranberry garlands and finally tying together fresh fruit and veggie bundles. Some years we don't get around to making all these things, and that's alright too. This tradition doesn't need to be complicated.

When deciding what to hang on your outdoor tree, it's important to choose healthy treats for the wildlife that lives in your area. We typically decorate our tree with birds in mind, but there might be other wildlife in your area. Add a few things for them too.

Healthy treats for birds and other wildlife would include:

Dehydrated fruit slices hung on a string (apples, oranges, pear)

Fresh fruit and vegetables hung on a string (apples, pears, berries, grapes, oranges, banana and carrots)

Homemade bird seed ornaments or suet cakes

Pinecone or orange birdfeeders

What NOT to feed birds and other wildlife:

Raw meat

Bread and cookies

Potato chips

Avocado

Chocolate

Table scraps

Mouldy or rancid bird seeds

- Choose a tree that is easy to access.
- Respect of any rules against hanging things on trees in local parks.
- Hang treats using materials that are 100% compostable (100% cotton, wool, twine or other nature materials that will decompose over time)
- Make sure to revisit the tree regularly and pick up any food that goes uneaten, falls to the ground or becomes spoiled.



(From Backwoods Mama: Raising outdoor kids)



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